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THE AMERICAN ELECTIONS

TEN years ago, at a moment when the economic blitz had reached its most terrifying ferocity, while trade stood still, banks closed their doors and fourteen millions of unemployed men could look only to charity for relief, the Democratic Party was swept into power both at the White House and in Congress. It would be difficult to find a single obvious resemblance between the political and economic background of that day and this. War has abolished unemployment; prices are rising in a mildly inflationary boom and the concern of the Administration is now to fix "ceilings" for salaries, wages and the cost of living. In this wholly different environment we infer from the results of Tuesday's polls, so far as they are known, that the electorate is on the whole not altogether contented with the Administration's conduct of the war. It could not have upset the Administration had it wished to do so. For another two years the President, even if he had a hostile Congress to manage, must continue in office. Nor could the great Democratic majority in the Senate have been upset, since only a third of its members submit themselves on this occasion to the hazards of the ballot-box. But the electorate is restless and discontented and has seized an opportunity for the expression of its feelings. It has not given the Republican Opposition a majority in the House of Representatives. It has, therefore, given a warning to the President, without imposing a serious check on his leadership. It may compel him in some degree to modify his policy.

It would not be safe to deduce more regarding the wishes of the Electorate. It is content to leave the balance of power unchanged. That is the inference to be drawn even more from the volume of the poll than from its results. The apathy which had been obvious during the primary elections was equally characteristic of the vote itself. Doubtless the regular adherents of both parties went to the poll, but the balancing non-partisan voter was not interested, and in particular the women's vote is said to have been the lowest ever recorded. The figures were, of course, affected by the absence of millions of young men on military service and of workers transferred to distant towns, but the known facts concerning the women's vote go to show that this temporary redistribution of the population is not the whole explanation of the low poll. Voters normally stay at home when they are content that things should remain as they are. The Republicans may on the whole have profited by this apathy. Their organisation is said to have been the better of the two, while the Democrats stood to lose the more heavily by the accidental disfranchisement of so many manual workers. But there is no clear sign that any tide of mass enthusiasm is flowing in favour of the Republican Party.

The outstanding event of these elections may be the choice of Mr. Thomas Dewey as Governor of New York State, a success which falls to the Republicans for the first time in twenty years. This was the result to be expected from the poor tactics of the local Party and from its failure to retain the Socialist vote, a factor by no means negligible in this State, however feeble it may be elsewhere. The consequence may be to improve Mr. Dewey's chances of nomination, two years hence, should he prove himself a popular Governor, as the Republican candidate for the Presidency. He won his fame as a lawyer who had exposed the practices of some of New York City's racketeers, but he belongs, none the less, to the Conservative wing of his party, and may be the choice of the Old Guard, which has never taken kindly to Mr. Wendell Willkie's leadership. In several key States it may be an omen for the future that the Republicans have scored similar successes. The drop in the Democrats' majority in the House was expected, and is, indeed, customary midway in a party's term of office. It leaves the Administration still in control of the House. What is awkward here is that so many of the Southern Democrats are in reality conservatives. In the Upper Chamber the heaviest blow to President Roosevelt is the defeat of the veteran Senator Norris, to whose continual support the New Deal owed some of its most famous victories.

All of us, who are America's partners in the team of the United Nations, will scan these elections for some indication of the drift of opinion on international policy. Such hints as they do convey must be read with caution. At mid-term local predominate over national issues, and the electors do not seem to consider a popular Representative's record on foreign issues very closely. The average man, who was himself a bit of an isolationist before Pearl Harbour, may even have resented the organised attempt that was made to use these records as the test of fitness for re-election. The man who had been most hotly and deservedly attacked on this ground, Mr. Hamilton Fish has once more been re-elected, though by a very narrow majority. But our own guess about the significant movement of American opinion is that the state of mind which was isolationist up to December of last year has in the interval undergone some development. Fundamentally it is nationalist; its slogan was always "America First." It was satisfied and it felt secure in isolation, until America was actually attacked. To-day this habit of thought, which means primarily self-confidence, tends rather to exaggerate America's share in the war and the settlement and to underrate that of her allies. Its most inconvenient manifestation was a tendency perceptible on the Right to call for a needlessly large army, to reserve for it most of the available supplies and to delay its active offensive use, until it could turn the scales of victory by its own weight alone. That, needless to say, was never Mr. Roosevelt's conception of policy or of strategy. As little was it Mr. Wendell Willkie's, for he has striven, primarily against the Right Wing of his own Party, to stimulate the sense of urgency and hasten the adoption of an early offensive. This Nationalist Right Wing has had its successes: the election of Mrs. Luce, of the "Fortune" group, was one of them. Conceivably Mr. Dewey's election may be another. But not much can be inferred from these local events. The electorate was not thinking about issues of this magnitude, and barely half of it would appear to be thinking actively about politics at all. In short, it is content that Mr. Roosevelt's leadership should continue without any serious diminution of its prestige.

Egypt and the Caucasus

As we go to press, the news has come of what appears to be a very considerable victory in

Egypt. Up to this week our offensive had moved slowly, as in this kind of warfare against positions fortified in depth it always must in the initial stages. But it went well and was immensely helped by the superb work of the R.A.F., which ensured us air superiority, and by the work of the Navy on the coast. Then the break through of our infantry early in the week gave our tanks their chance, and Rommel's army is at the moment retreating in disorder.

In the Russian campaign the new fact is the penetration by the Germans of three valleys which run up the northern slopes of the main Caucasus range: each has a railway. Two of the termini, Nalchik and Alagir, have been taken; the latter commands the main military road, now so deeply under snow that further progress is thought to be impossible. The third terminus, Ordzhonikidze, now under attack, would offer an approach for an outflanking march on the Grozny oil-field. Active in this region, the enemy has shown less enterprise and more signs of fatigue at Stalingrad, where the Russians have some notable successes to their credit both on the northern flank and in the factory district. Little save the Führer's prestige is now at stake here, and the German losses are on a scale that recalls Verdun. The Russians, still pressing for a Second Front in Europe, have now disclosed, in what must have been an authorised indiscretion, that Timoshenko has a strategical reserve in waiting, with which he will launch an offensive, if and when we attack in the West.

The Indian Deadlock

The increase of activity among the patrols on both sides of the frontier between India and Burma together with the recent bombing raids may possibly be the prelude to serious fighting. If so, it is the more regrettable that no progress has been made, or on our side attempted to break the deadlock which followed the Cripps mission. Without freedom of movement and access to the imprisoned leaders of Congress, it is hard to see what Indians can do. We await with some anxiety news of the Government's decision to grant a passport and a seat in a plane to Mr. Rajagopalachari for a visit to London. He knows more than anyone else of the state of mind of the chief parties and is one of the three or four Hindus with whom Muslins would most willingly co-operate. To refuse him facilities for a visit to London would be both churlish and obstructive and we shall be slow to suppose that this can be the Government's intention. Meanwhile, a plan for a settlement, packed with details, several of them novel, has been published by Mr. Vernon Bartlett. Most of these suggestions may be good in themselves, but the plan seems to us weak in the one thing that matters. It does Indianise the Viceroy's Council but falls short of making it a *de facto* National Government. It leaves the Viceroy (or as Mr. Bartlett prefers to call him, the Governor-General) still acting as Premier. That means that no Indian would form this Government of National Defence, preside over it, hold it together and co-ordinate its policy; nor would any Indian have the right to address the people as its leader and spokesman. It seems to us essential: (1) that an Indian as premier should be charged with the formation of what will be by convention a Coalition Ministry, and (2) that it should be subject to the rule of collective responsibility. Again, in the matter of defence we think that what Indians want is not primarily a "say" in discussing it. They want arms. So long as we refuse to set up a Home Guard and refuse arms to young men who could be useful as guerillas, Indians feel that the traditional distrust continues. It may be that rifles are in short supply, but much can be done with grenades. If these essentials were granted, some of Mr. Bartlett's additions would be valuable.

Life Insurance

The vested interests of industrial life assurance seem to exercise almost a mesmeric influence in our national affairs. It did not apparently occur to the Kennet Committee, which has recently reported on the release of man power in the banking, Stock Exchange and insurance fields, that the State could collect, through the employers and Post Office, the bulk of the industrial life premiums which are still collected by house-to-house canvass. Such a suggestion, because it would have savoured of nationalisation, was not even considered. The industrial life business employs 51,172 men and 43,765 women. The Prudential total outdoor staff (17,525, of which 9,460 are women) is actually larger than it was before the war. The Kennet Committee accept the interested view that as thrift organisations the industrial life companies are doing valuable work in encouraging small savings and in withdrawing from the public a large volume of purchasing power which would otherwise tend to promote inflation. But in the case of ordinary life assurance the Committee, quite illogically, do not see any need for the "creation and maintenance by advertising or salesmanship" of a public appetite for this form of saving. In their view to save through insurance is desirable in wartime in the case of the workers, but unnecessary in the case of the private investor, which does not make sense unless one wishes to make class distinctions. The real issue is whether the State in wartime can induce or enforce savings more cheaply—in terms of man power—than the insurance companies, in particular the industrial life companies. We shall see what Sir William Beveridge has to say about it in his report on social security.

Retailers in Trouble

The resignation of three members of the Board of Trade's Committee on Retail Trade raises afresh a vitally important issue. The three who have resigned are an interesting assortment—a Conservative M.P., the representative of the drapers, and Professor Sargent Florence. The matter over which they have felt it necessary to leave the Committee is the rejection by the Government of the proposal to introduce a compensation scheme for retailers who have to close their shops on account of the war. The scheme put forward by the Committee was not a very good one; and Mr. Dalton, in rejecting it, was able to point to the failure of the retailers to rally at all solidly behind it. But the real question is whether there is to be any scheme at all. The main premise, on which the Board of Trade have fallen back, to try to secure greater equity in apportioning supplies to the smaller retailers, is clearly no answer to the problem; for, though it may keep open some shops which would otherwise have to close (which is not an unmixed blessing), it offers nothing to those who do have to close all the same. We are well aware of the difficulties which any scheme of compensation is bound to involve—especially now that the matter has been left so long, and so many shops have had to shut down without compensation—but we agree with the resigning members that these difficulties ought to be faced, and not evaded mainly at the expense of the smaller shopkeepers. Mr. Dalton, we suspect, agrees, and is but a helpless executant of policies dictated to him by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But Mr. Dalton, as the President of the Board of Trade, must bear, at any rate, the nominal responsibility; and this may well recoil upon him later, if the very large body of small traders is left with a rankling sense of injustice. He would do well to get rid of the members of the present Retail Trade Committee, and to try again with a stronger body, widened to include the food trades, which were not covered by the original terms of reference. The food trades, of course, are under the Ministry of Food, and not under the Board of Trade; but the problem is one and indivisible, and departmental considerations ought not to be allowed to get in the way of its treatment as a whole.

American War Output

Mr. Tanner, the President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, at present on a visit to the United States, does not seem to be impress by the existing tempo of American war pr duction. This is not at all surprising. We Great Britain are apt to dwell very much on t shortcomings of our own economic war effor and these are serious enough even now, especia on the side of national organisation a systematic placing of contracts so as to make t best use of the smaller firms. On the oth hand, in terms of labour organisation and pr duction per man hour the British effort is by t time remarkably impressive. Mr. Bevin, r porting Mr. Lyttelton, said recently that outp per man hour was up by 44 per cent. as compar with 1939; and even if full allowance is ma for the inevitable uncertainty of any such figu the fact is undoubted that there has been a ve big increase. It has, however, taken a long time achieve this result, and there have been ma ups and downs in the course of achieving i No one need be surprised if, by our pres standards, there is a marked lack of consiste slogging away on the other side of the Atlantic- quite as marked as the difference which o Russian Trade Union visitors observed a year ag between the intensity of their effort and our It is certain that there is still in America a gre amount of slack to be taken up. There have be remarkable hustles over camp and emergenc house construction and over shipbuilding; but th engineering factories are bound to take som time to tune up to a wartime pace of continuou production. They have, too, many more Trad Union difficulties than we have had. The ri between the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. is boun to make it much harder to create effective work shop machinery; and the tradition of hostilit to Trade Unionism in many big America businesses presents a further difficulty. No doub American war industry will warm up in spite o these obstacles. The recent official scaling-dow of the targets for war output is said to be only a matter of substituting quality for quantity But there may be in it also an element of realisti sobriety. Let us not forget how long it has take us to get our war industry into its stride.

Cars, Tyres and Petrol

The car census was overdue; and it is remark able, in view of the rubber shortage and th difficulties over the supply of synthetic rubbe from America, that steps were not taken som time ago to commandeer suitable tyres from laid- up vehicles. It is also apparent to anyone wh keeps his eyes open that a great deal of petro could be saved if persons driving on offici business were compelled to use little cars instea of luxury limousines; and it is to be hoped tha the hundreds of thousands of low horse-powe vehicles laid up by their owners will now b drawn upon in order to replace vehicles o unnecessarily high consumption. It is natur enough that car-owners, in fear of possibl inflation, should prefer keeping their cars to sellin them for what they will fetch—the more s because early replacement may be difficult afte the war. But few will object if the State take their laid-up vehicles and puts them to use i order to save unnecessary consumption of petrol What would be resented would be a wholesal scrapping of tyres, for the purpose of enablin owners of luxuriously large cars to get new tyre made out of reclaimed rubber; and it is to b hoped that the official policy will be one of takin the vehicles and using them, whenever possibl rather than one of removing tyres which are no good enough for use without scrapping. As fo the new cuts in petrol, there is plainly room fo them, provided they are made with a large amoun of discrimination. There are still too man persons who are getting pretty easy petrol i connection with various forms of war service without any adequate check on the uses to whic the allowances are actually put. On the oth hand, there are a good many persons who hav only just enough petrol to carry out duties whic are indisputably necessary; and to cut suc persons by 10 or even 25 per cent. as a matte of routine is plainly foolish.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ITALY

We wrote last week of the urgent need of converting the United Nations into a real Grand Alliance. This can only be done if there is complete unity in the conduct of the war, a continual co-ordination of strategy, which is always half military and half political. We gave some instances in which there has obviously been a lack of agreement and of co-ordination, and we propose this week to draw attention to another. Little attention has been paid in this country to the fact that in the United States Italians who are subjects of an enemy state are not treated as enemy aliens. This is a remarkable and significant fact. It is true that the action of the United States Government was probably to some extent influenced by the difficulty of dealing with many hundreds of thousands of Italian subjects residing there. But the difficulty cuts both ways. If it is awkward to intern over 500,000 enemy aliens, it is extremely dangerous to leave them at large, if they are really hostile—and the awkwardness and the danger increases with the increase in numbers. Behind this decision of the United States to risk the danger and leave the Italians at large is a definite policy which is part of the strategy of their political warfare. Anyone who has studied carefully their public pronouncements and actions since their entry into the war will have observed that they make a clear distinction between the Italian Government and the Italian people. By their treatment of Italians in America and in every other way they are continually saying in effect to the Italians in Italy: "We are fighting Mussolini and fascism; we are not fighting you. We know that the vast majority of you have no heart for this war, that you hate it. We don't hold you responsible for it. If, therefore, you cease to support Mussolini, who has put his and your heads into a Nazi noose, and if you cease to fight his and Hitler's war, we shall offer you, not a punitive, but a fair peace and will welcome you as free and equal partners into our alliance of free nations."

One has only to state the position in this way to see that there is no agreement between our policy and the American towards the Italians. In fact there is disagreement. This is the third year of the war for Italy and her record has been one of continuous disaster and defeat. If one thing is certain it is that the morale of the majority of Italians was bad when they entered the war and has grown consistently worse. There is among the people little or no active support of Mussolini and his fascist government and probably large numbers of them are passively and apathetically hostile to the rulers who have brought them nothing but misery and humiliation. Here we had offered to us an opportunity which a Minister of Propaganda would hardly have dared to hope for in his most roseate day-dreams, a fertile field ploughed to receive the seeds of political warfare. If our Foreign Office and the various departments which are practising the art of political warfare had seized their opportunity and conducted a vigorous and persistent campaign against Italian morale on the home front, the embarrassments of Mussolini and his German masters would have been enormously increased. But no real attempt to do this has ever been made. Our propaganda in Italy has been feeble and apathetic. We have never boldly adopted the American policy of dividing the Italian people from the Italian Government and of pledging ourselves to give the people a square deal if they repudiated the government; we have never, as our correspondence columns have recently shown, encouraged the anti-fascist Italians in this country to form a vigorous Free Italy movement.

The reasons for this missed opportunity are curious. It would be impossible for even the most realistic and erudite historian to pretend that "Vansittartism" in any of its Protean forms can be applied to the Italian people. The number of "Pro-Germans" in this country has always been negligible, but for every Englishman who is a "Pro-German" there have been and are thousands of Pro-Italians. For a hundred years the tradition of Anglo-Italian friendship persisted and it was nourished by all who visited Italy and returned from it with a love of the country and affection for its people. It might therefore have been expected that nothing would have stood in the way of the American policy towards Italy being wholeheartedly accepted and vigorously executed by our government and its propaganda departments. Their failure to do so has been due to various causes. Mr. Eden himself, upon whom the policy must primarily depend, seems to be uninterested in the whole question of Italy. This leaves the way open to certain influential circles in this country who have views with regard to the treatment and future of Italy which are, in fact, inconsistent with the American policy. They hold that, when we have won the war, we should create a new "balance of power" in the Mediterranean and that we should obtain it by "strengthening" some of our smaller allies and by "weakening" or even breaking up Italy. To listen to some of these plans for European reconstruction is to find one self back, not among the most Punic peace-makers of Versailles, but the still more Punic peace-makers who used to carve up Europe with Frederick the Great in the eighteenth century.

It is essential that British policy towards Italy should be brought in line with that of the United States and that no such fantasies of eighteenth century policy should be allowed to obstruct this. There should be a common, vigorous offensive of political warfare, accompanying our military offensive in Africa, against the morale of the Italian people. That offensive must turn upon a firm promise of a square deal to them if they repudiate Mussolini and fascism. The stakes to be won here are for the Allies of the greatest value. The Italian front—particularly the Italian home front—is of major importance to Hitler. In 1918 German power began to break down on the circumference, among the satellites and allies, before cracks started in the centre. The same will happen in this war and nothing would strike a colder fear into the hearts of Hitler and the German people than to see the process of 1918 beginning to repeat itself in 1942.

THE CHURCH AND THE SCHOOLS

The "dual system" has been the despair of every educational reformer ever since the development of a system of national education in this country. The resistance of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church to any attempt to interfere with their separate establishments provokes from them at once a powerful and organised attack which either persuades the Minister not to touch the problem, as with Mr. Herbert Fisher in 1918, or leads to the defeat of his proposals, as with Sir Charles Trevelyan in 1930. Now all parties are committed to some measure of educational reform; and, once again, it is clear that the fate of Mr. Butler's effort, like that of his predecessors, will depend upon the willingness of the churches to co-operate.

The Roman Catholic Church has spoken bluntly in the pronouncement of Cardinal Hinsley in the *Times* of November 2. Nothing must be done, he says in effect, to touch the vested right of Roman Catholics to their own schools. The practical result of his demand is that the State shall make provision at its own cost for all improvements in that small field of education which the Roman Catholic Church occupies. It can move forward the frontiers so long as it is understood that the control remains unchanged.

The Church of England is proceeding on a parallel path but with greater tact and sophistication. In an interim Report, which is about to be submitted with the blessing of Archbishop Temple, to the Church Assembly for approval, it hails with enthusiasm the coming of educational reconstruction. It is prepared to agree to the closing of all schools which are not of the proper standard; and it is willing, subject to an appeal to the Board by the Managers, to agree to the reorganisation of non-provided schools by the Local Education Authority.

But here its concessions stop. For it asks that for those church schools which can either be fully or "substantially" maintained any new Bill should recognise the need to preserve the *status quo*. Where the schools cannot be kept up to standard by the managers, it agrees that the school shall virtually pass into the control of the L.E.A. subject to the right of the Church to have a "reserved" teacher competent to give denominational instruction over and above the Agreed Syllabus; and it suggests that while the "reserved" teacher need not always be the head teacher, the L.E.A. shall consult the managers so that the person appointed is "in no way unacceptable or inimical to the aims of the school." It makes a plea against any large-scale transfer of Church schools in single school areas to the L.E.A. on the ground of their "honourable and responsible share in village life"; and it proposes methods for reassessing areas to safeguard the Church against an undue loss of inadequate or redundant schools.

It may well be that Mr. Butler may consider this price worth paying in order to get in return improvements not otherwise likely to be purchased except by a long and bitter fight. We must not conceal from ourselves that the price will be high. In effect, the Church will keep all the schools for the fabric of which it can raise the necessary funds; and the teachers in those schools will be under its control. In the area governed by the L.E.A. thousands of teachers must be "acceptable" to churchmen as a condition of their promotion to headships; and every school must have a specialist in religious teaching. The scales are to continue to be weighted in the teaching profession pretty heavily on the side of Anglicanism against the teacher who is either a strong Nonconformist or an Agnostic.

This is, of course, the kind of price we had to pay for the Act of 1902; and, though its disadvantages are real, most people, on balance, would probably agree that the results were worth the price. It means that the Church will still, in considerable measure, dominate the school-life of the countryside. It leaves teachers handicapped by managers whose first interest in the school is not education but religion. In a word, because historical circumstances brought the British State into the educational field later than decency required, the Church is to continue to exercise an authority in the schools which goes far beyond any serious influence it can claim in the national life. And it is not easy to avoid thinking of the managers of church schools as apostles of that brand of religion recently commended to the Conservative Party by its sub-committee on educational reconstruction. It was a brand which bore all the marks of that attitude of mind which made Hannah More and Wilberforce so intolerable to the people of democratic temper in their time.

On balance, therefore, we think the price is worth paying, though we deeply regret the temper which insists upon its exaction. We do not think it really benefits the Church; and we are confident that it does little save harm both to the children and their teachers. The fact that the Church exacts this price, that a man so liberal in outlook as Archbishop Temple, can commend these proposals as a "genuine recognition of the changed circumstances of the time," suggests that no institution with power in its hands will voluntarily abandon it. But the combination of property and emotion which the National Society represents is unlikely to be beaten; and, since English education is accustomed to half-measures, it is possibly better to take the compromise before the extremists start to beat up forces which will resist any change at all.

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PUBLIC UTILITIES AND THE FUTURE

THE question of the future organisation of the main public utility services is continually getting tangled up with discussions about the future of local government areas and the ways of meeting the commonly recognised need for local government reorganisation. The four main utilities —electricity, gas, water and transport—which are generally grouped together in such discussions stand on a different footing from certain other services, such as housing and main drainage, which can also be described as utilities in a wider sense. In this article, it is proposed to limit attention to the four services mentioned, and to consider what ought to be done about them in connection with post-war planning and how their needs are related to the wider question of local government reform.

It is often suggested, usually in rather a vague way, that the four public utility services ought to be taken right out of the sphere of local government and transferred bodily to some sort of national administration. The form of administration most commonly favoured is a Public Corporation, on the model of the London Passenger Transport Board or the B.B.C.; but different advocates favour varying versions of the scheme, according to their several desires to get as near as possible to socialisation or to keep as near as possible to private enterprise. In one instance, of course, the solution has already been in part adopted. The Central Electricity Board exists as a public corporation owning and operating the "Grid" of main transmission lines and acting as an intermediary for the transfer of current from the generating stations to the local distributing agencies. But the C.E.B., save very exceptionally, does not itself generate electricity, or own the generating stations: nor is it responsible for distributing current to the consumers. It is a wholesaler, and it buys from generating bodies which range from power companies to municipal or privately owned concerns also engaged in retail distribution, and sells back current, very often to the very concerns from which it has made the purchase. This is a curiously anomalous position, which involves very great financial complexities and seriously cramps the Board's style; and no one defends it in principle. But it is very difficult to alter, because proposals for change meet the opposition on the one hand of the power companies and joint stock electricity undertakings, and on the other of municipal bodies which do not want to have the control of the local supply taken out of their hands.

For gas and water, there are no national bodies corresponding in any way to the C.E.B. The gas industry is divided between municipal and company undertakings; and, as in the case of electricity, the latter are often controlled by holding companies working on a very large scale. In some cases, these holding companies approach the character of regional amalgamations; but more often their controlled concerns are widely scattered geographically, and the fusion is merely financial. There has been talk from time to time of a National Gas Grid or of regional grids. But nothing has come of this talk; and it is more than doubtful whether a national grid could offer any advantages. Regional amalgamations could; but, save in a few areas, probably more by furthering a pooling of higher technical staffs and research and development work than by constructing any sort of grid or increasing the size of the actual producing units. There are not in the gas industry, which it must be remembered produces and distributes coke as well as gas, the same advantages of concentrated large-scale production as there are in the case of electricity supply.

Water is a public utility; but it is primarily a public health service, though it has also important industrial aspects. It is a service already mainly in the hands of public bodies, ranging from parish councils to the huge undertakings of the Metropolitan Water Board and the other great urban authorities; and there are in a few areas, such as South-West Lancashire and the East Midlands, important Joint Boards linking together a number of local government areas. But there is no national co-ordination, and no national planning body of any sort, beyond the Ministry of Health. Water affairs are commonly thrashed out in Parliament by way of private bills; and the grant of powers to the great undertakings to bring water from distant areas, such as Wales and Lakeland, is usually coupled with an obligation to supply areas which lie along the lines of transmission.

Transport raises a different set of issues, even if we confine our attention, as we shall in this article, to transport by road. There are both municipal and private passenger road transport services; and bus development, especially over longish distances, has come increasingly under the control of big operating companies, which can act, except in relation to purely local transport, in disregard of local government frontiers. Latterly, the railway companies have acquired a large holding in many of these undertakings; and the powers of the Regional Commissioners who control licensing have been used, in relation to both passenger and goods transport, to restrict the growth of road services in the interests of railway finance. In some places, neighbouring municipalities run joint passenger services; and in many the municipal services run outside the municipal boundaries. As road passenger transport develops rapidly as an inter-town and as a town and country service, existing local government areas become more and more inappropriate as operating units; and, of course, local government practically does not enter into the service of goods transport by road.

What ought to be done to make these various public utilities work with full efficiency in the national interest; and how will their reorganisation on this principle affect the part of the local authorities in their operation? It is sometimes suggested that if a system of regional self-government were superimposed upon the local government structure, the public utilities ought to be handed over entirely to operation by the new Regional Councils. It is clear, however, that no electrical engineer, no water engineer, and no planner of road transport services would be in the least likely, if he were set to devise a system of regions appropriate to his own service, to arrive at an allocation which would be at all acceptable as a basis for general regional government, and also that each specialist would arrive at an allocation markedly different from that favoured by the others. This would be the case, partly because of geographical factors affecting the different services in different ways, partly because of historical factors related to their past development, and partly because of technical considerations, which differ widely from one service to another. The notion that Regionalism, in the form which implies the setting up of a single many-purpose authority in each of a number of fixed Regions, offers a simple solution of the problem of introducing efficiency and order into the public utility services as a group can be dismissed.

Nor can each service be regarded as a unified whole, to be handed over completely to this or that authority. In the case of electricity, it is pretty clear that generation, as well as main-line transmission, ought to be carried on by a unified national authority, and not regionally or locally. In other words, the Central Electricity Board ought to acquire the generating stations. But it does not at all follow that the C.E.B., or any national body, ought to take over the retail distribution of electricity to the household consumers—a business which is likely to be managed more satisfactorily from the consumers' standpoint if it is made subject to their local control. There ought, no doubt, to be a national planning body for electrical development, and especially for ensuring the effective spread of supply throughout the country districts. But this does not imply national operation; and there is every reason for holding that the service of distribution should be left in the hands of local bodies rather than transferred to a few huge regional agencies more remote from contact with the consumers. A sensible reorganisation of local government areas, falling a long way short of consolidation into a few huge Regions modelled on the Civil Defence Regions, could provide a local structure which could perfectly well manage the local distribution of electricity within a national system run by the C.E.B.

Gas stands on a different footing. It too needs a national body for co-ordinated research, planning, standardisation of equipment, and development work generally. But its main need seems, as we have seen, to be for unified technical control on a regional basis, rather than for larger-scale units of actual production. If Regionalism were adopted as a basis for the local government of the future, the new Regional Councils might be suitable bodies to take over the gas industry within their areas along these lines and subject to the planning powers of a National Gas Authority. Certainly, a regional solution is greatly preferable to the existing trend towards purely financial amalgamations of gas undertakings scattered all over the country.

Water, again, raises quite a different set of considerations. It is clearly out of the question to split up the country into a number of self-contained water regions; for, however large the regions might be, it would be necessary for some to draw a large part of their supplies from others. This may be held to constitute a case for having a single National Water Authority to manage the entire business of long-distance transmission. But there are strong reasons against this. It is highly undesirable to allow areas to draw their water supplies from a long distance when there are in fact usable supplies near at hand; and it is therefore desirable to leave the responsibility for water supplies mainly in local or regional hands—to say nothing of the unwisdom of severing the water service entirely from the other essential services of public health. What seems to be needed in this case is a National Water Commission empowered to draw up and supervise a national plan for the allocation of water resources, including the grant of powers to local or regional authorities to draw supplies from outside their areas, but only after they have made full use of their own resources. Subject to this national supervision, water supply could well be organised as a regional service, and water areas *might* fit in with regions suitable for other purposes of regional government. On the other hand, they might not; for the question of water supply is tangled up with that of land drainage and Catchment Areas, and geography rather than history or community sentiment is bound to have the last word in the definition of satisfactory water regions.

Finally, there is the question of transport, which is tied up with proposals for the unification of road and rail transport, and perhaps other transport agencies as well, under full national public ownership and control. If this solution were adopted, transport would simply vanish out of the list of local or regional services, save to the extent to which local or regional bodies remained in being as agents of the co-ordinated national authorities. It seems most unlikely that road, any more than rail, transport could be really conveniently broken up into a series of regional units, or could be suitable for operation by Regional Councils of a many-purpose character. Devolution from a nationally unified authority might be highly desirable; and some regional or local areas constituted for other purposes might be suitable areas for the exercise of devolved powers. But no general devolution on this principle would seem at all likely to work well.

To what does all this add up? First, to the conclusion that in framing plans for any reorganisation of local government on a regional basis it will be wisest, in the first instance, to leave out the four public utility services we have been discussing, and to see where, if at all, they fit in only when the pattern of regional government has

been designed on wider grounds. Secondly, that there is no *general* way in which all four services can be fitted in, because they have widely differing technical requirements and existing patterns of organisation. Thirdly, that we are much more likely to get efficiency and good service if we attend to their needs directly, and do not allow our thoughts to be diverted by considerations about the general reform of local government. If the four services are studied directly in this way, it is not difficult to see in broad outline what needs doing about them; whereas, if we try to look at them all together, and at plans for regional government too, the only possible consequence will be a confusion behind which vested interests will shelter and be able to feel secure that in the end nothing at all will get done.

A LONDON DIARY

With the new session of Parliament almost upon us, there are some signs that the Labour Party realises that it is time to be stirring. Last week's speeches by Mr. Morrison and Mr. Dalton had in them a note of energy and challenge which marked them off from any Ministerial utterances of recent months. I doubt if there is any single element of more importance in the domestic scene than the need for recognition that a very large body of public opinion expects, and would, indeed, welcome, great social changes; and that it is only by effecting these that we can keep America progressive and retain the confidence of Russia. There is no future for the Labour Party unless it convinces a large section of middle opinion that it takes its socialism seriously. And the only way in which it can do that is by insistence, with precision and concreteness, that democracy without equality as a living foundation of its activities will cease, in the planned society, to be anything but a hollow sham. The speeches of Mr. Morrison and Mr. Dalton did at least imply a knowledge that the Labour Party must think in shorter periods than geological epochs.

* * *

I listened in a college common room the other day to one of those conversations on the difference between the habits of Americans and Englishmen which might have come straight out of Dickens's *American Notes*. The American, it was said, tells you all about himself in the first half-hour; and he resents the reserve of the Englishman who yields a knowledge of himself only inch by inch, and then under pressure. But this difference is surely the difference between a society where the social tradition is democratic and one where it is aristocratic in pattern. Our relations retain much more of the aloofness and ceremonial which our hierarchical structure continues to impose, and we almost resent neglect of its forms as a derogation from our status. My own suspicion is that the real difference between the two peoples is in vitality; the pace of all things American is much more swift than ours. That comes out remarkably in things like the theatre and the novel. Is it a matter of climate? Or is it that the range the average Englishman permits himself to examine is more narrow than that which comes within the American's purview?

* * *

I am at least certain that the more British academic circles get to know of what is best in modern American scholarship the more impressive they will find its achievement. Perhaps it is my own greater familiarity with the fields which makes me think that in law and history the work of American scholars compares more than favourably with our own. I do not think, for instance, that we have any book on British history which compares with the sweep and insight of the Beard's great work, nor any recent monographs as original in the new vistas they have opened as those of Arthur Schlesinger on the American merchants and the Revolution or Walter Webb on the Great Plains. One of the good results of the war is that it has brought Professor Webb to Oxford and Professor Commager—whose Documents of American History ought to be in every public library—to Cambridge. They both have things to say of an America we hardly know. I would give a good deal to hear Professor Webb explain the epic of cattle and sheep in Texas to the British Army. I hope the War Office and the Air Ministry will bear in mind the presence of these two distinguished scholars. The benefits they can bestow ought not to be confined to undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge.

* * *

I noticed with interest, in the *Spectator* of October 23rd, an article on the issue of the war criminals and their future fate. One phrase in it fell rather curiously on my mind. The writer notes that we shall not repeat the mistake of the last war and allow the butchers to put themselves out of reach. How will this be done? It will, says the writer, be a part of the Armistice terms that they shall be handed over to justice. If this is ineffective, he goes on, "the efficiency of the German Gestapo is unparalleled. If it chooses, it can lay hands on any single individual demanded by the Allies." The inference that the Gestapo is maintained in Germany after Hitler's defeat as a kind of Pinkertons' for the United States does not strike me as attractive. Will Himmler, with his passion for organisation, be left in charge?

* * *

Though Mr. Knickerbocker's Penguin *Is Tomorrow Hitler's?* was written before the American entrance into the war, it hardly "dates" at all, and some of it is brilliantly effective journalism. Mr. Knickerbocker takes most of the questions the man in the street asks about the war and answers them carefully, but briskly and simply. He is very good indeed on Germany and France. On Russia, I think his view deals with the problem by standards that are largely inapplicable. Most of the English section deals with Mr. Churchill and answers the kind of question American lecturers are expected to answer. But on Pétain, Darlan, Hitler and Laval, he makes points of real interest and value. I cannot imagine a more useful book than this for use among the armed forces.

* * *

I am glad to see that the Union of Democratic Control has written to Mr. Amery to urge on him the acceptance of Mr. Rajagopalachari's offer to fly to London to discuss the Indian situation. I am not, I confess, very hopeful that Mr. Amery will respond favourably. One of the most unhappy features of this Government has been the fact that Mr. Amery, who has an agile and eager mind, should have proved so rigid and harsh on an issue in which these qualities were bound to be fatal. It was Mr. Amery who told Mr. Churchill, in the debates on the India Act of 1935, that Britain always fails when its statesmen rely on repression, and always succeeds when they rely on freedom; yet his record in office is about as barren of that understanding as Mr. Churchill's own. Some of his friends, I am told, say that it is not his own policy that he is applying. I take leave to doubt that. But, if that is indeed the explanation, I should have thought he would have had the courage to resign. No doubt it is true that resignation is becoming a lost political art. Statesmen glue themselves to office in our day in a way that would have shocked the House of Commons before 1914.

* * *

I picked up the other day a selection from Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* which contained a dialogue, new to me, between Wilberforce and Romilly. It is as brilliant and alive as on the day Landor wrote it, and it has caught marvellously that nauseating note of self-righteousness which made men like Cobbett furious whenever they heard his name. "Unholy as the gains may be," Wilberforce is made to say, "we must not meddle with vested rights and ancient institutions." In another place he urges Romilly to reverence his superiors. "When men begin to think themselves above the great," he tells Romilly, "social order is woefully deranged. I deplore the absence of that self-abasement on which is laid the foundation of all the Christian virtues." One almost catches in the conversation phrases which might emerge, say, in an imaginary discussion between the present Bishop of Gloucester and Sir Stafford Cripps. Reading Landor and Cobbett on Wilberforce I cannot help feeling that the rigours of our law of libel deprive us of controversial joys which must have been a great comfort to Bentham's generation.

* * *

Mr. Winant's speech at Cambridge the other day was not very well reported. I was interested in the impression he made on three very different types. An undergraduate told me that it was a relief to listen to someone who had "to fight for words to express his feelings." A don described the speech as the "triumph of character over shyness." A trade unionist said he had heard no man of eminence speak in this war who so obviously meant every word he said. President Roosevelt never did a wiser thing than when he appointed Mr. Winant in the place of Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Winant's directness and sincerity have more than atoned for the impact left by the curious philosophy of his predecessor. One hears little of Mr. Kennedy nowadays; though there are rumours that he would have liked to be the Democratic Senator from Massachusetts. I imagine that his future in politics turns largely on whether "Jim" Farley is successful in his effort to capture the Democratic party machine.

* * *

I have been reading with great interest the report of Mr. L. R. McColvin, the City Librarian of Westminster, on the present condition and future of our public library system. His material is too important for a note. But it is worth recording that 75 per cent. of librarians report increased issues far above the normal, that the increase is exceptional in blitzed areas, and that libraries have on the whole increased their expenditure on books. It is good to read of "a large northern city" which sent ten thousand volumes to the libraries of reception areas, and of one in the north-west which lent its children's librarian. I note with interest that the Ministry of Labour asked that library facilities should be provided at or near factories and offered financial assistance; but Mr. McColvin states that though detailed schemes have been submitted by a number of librarians, he is not aware of any grant having been made. Is that the Treasury? One's instinct, almost, is to assume that if a Department has a really good idea, the Treasury by force of habit goes into mourning.

HAROLD J. LASKI

THIS ENGLAND

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SEX TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

The advocates of this are far too prominent; I wonder why? There is something sinister in it all. The simple and reverent thing is to teach the youngsters in our day schools to memorise the passage of Scripture dictated by Paul in his Epistle of the Romans, chapter 12, verse 1. The 10 Commandments, with the General Confession, and the General Thanksgiving should also be communicated through the teacher. Nothing further is needed regarding sex.

Far too much attention is paid to this unhealthy sex business which should be relegated to the caverns of oblivion with its sister nostrum—birth control.—Letter in *The Wimbledon Borough News*.

Mr. Wragg (Belper): The average miner can afford to buy lots of things which a rich man cannot afford.—Official Report of House of Commons Proceedings, Wednesday, October 21.

SHAW DESMOND: How You Live When You Die. A Guide to the Next World . . . Complete, from Plane to Plane. There is no other book like this one. Shaw Desmond has paid many hundreds of actual astral visits to the spheres to get the unique information contained in this book. Tells about astral travelling, building by mind, politics, education and family life there, and deals illuminatingly with many of the problems likely to arise.—Advert. in the *Times* Literary Supplement, October 31st, 1942.

Dog for Sale, eats anything. Fond of children.—Advt. in the *Hayes News*.

CONSTRUCTIVE HYGIENE

A RATHER idle dispute has long existed between the advocates of preventive and those of curative medicine; but in truth there exists no real basis for conflict between them; they have in view the same goal and are actuated by the same fears. In a stimulating and freshly written little work called *Health for the Young*,* the author, Dr. Lindsey Batten, makes an appeal for an altogether different approach to the whole problem of health and disease. Dr. Batten is the author of that wise and simply written book *The Single-handed Mother*. His latest book is similarly full of commonsense, and is equally the fruit of long personal experience and unprejudiced observation. He regards our conventional attitude to health and disease as comparable with our attitude to peace and war; reminding us that at the end of the last war, from 1919 onward, practically everyone hoped that never again would there be a comparable world conflict. People in every country set out to take preventive measures; novels, plays, pamphlets and speeches aimed at keeping green in the public memory the horrors, futilities and nastinesses of the war just concluded. "The nations made solemn promises not to do it again, and devised elaborate and expensive machinery intended to nip wars in the bud. . . . But fear of war has not prevented war, and the devices for nipping war in the bud have failed." Dr. Batten asks whether even we in this country can be said in any rational way to have desired peace. He reminds us that "we were not prepared to arm ourselves to defend peace against law-breakers, to go all out to make friends with our neighbours, to take our share of the labours and sorrows, or to give our share of the resources of the world. Moreover, at least by comparison with our 'anti-war' propaganda, our 'pro-peace' propaganda has been quite negligible. Further, there has been little sign that, collectively at least, we enjoy peace when we have got it, or have any plan for turning it to good account. On the contrary, it is generally agreed that community of purpose scarcely appears among us except in time of war. . . . Thus to fear of war as a cause of war must be added the absence of desire for and delight in peace, and it is plain that if we form a negative conception of peace even negative peace eludes us." As I have said, Dr. Batten considers that our attitude to health and disease closely resembles our attitude to peace and war. Without unduly minimising the services rendered by doctors and hospitals, he truly says that "out of the total sum of disease only a small proportion is controllable by the doctor, however he be employed. A much larger proportion is preventible by improvements in environment, diet and conditions of life, universally known to be desirable but not in fact carried through. . . . But the more serious error is to suppose that prevention of disease is a sufficient recipe for health, to confuse health with absence of disease as we have confused peace with the absence of war."

With practically all of this we are bound to agree; and nearly all our hygienic propaganda to the public should be based on this conception of positive health. But we should not, therefore, infer that the issue is one which should materially affect the work and study of the ordinary practising doctor. Disease and accident are existent facts, and they are likely to be existent facts for many a long year yet, no matter whether our attitude to health is positive or negative; or what preventive measures, collective or individual, we may take. We already train and set apart a section of the medical profession and a number of other specialised officials, to consider and to report on environmental preventive measures and to enforce such regulations as the State, acting on technical advice, may have made. The practising doctor on his daily round and in the course of his daily consultations gives to his individual patients many hints as to such environmental amenities as it is in their individual power to secure. To that extent every doctor should have sufficient accurate technical knowledge of preventive medicine and of the general conditions of healthy life. But his main duty will, and in my opinion should be, concentrated on curative and palliative medicine and surgery. It is when people are sick, or believe themselves to be sick, that they seek the ministrations of their doctor; and competent doctors are fully occupied in applying their knowledge and technical experience to the relief of pain and, where possible, to the removal of disease or the lessening of its dangers. The nature of their work, as of their training, almost inevitably gives practising doctors a negative attitude to health.

Then, again, among the fundamental conditions of positive health are many that are being dealt with under the name of preventive hygiene by the specialised medical and other officers carrying out State regulations; such things as sanitation, decent housing, wholesome food, and pure milk, are typical examples. These are things which can only efficiently be dealt with collectively. Other branches of preventive medicine have nothing to do with positive hygiene, but are concerned with the application by technicians of specific precautionary measures against specific diseases. Examples are afforded by vaccination, by anti-diphtheria inoculation, and by the administration of this or that vitamin the absence of which has been found to be the direct cause of such diseases as rickets and scurvy. Here is a distinction which, in my view, imposes a limit to the wholesale adoption of the positive health ideal in popular propaganda. After all, we are professing democrats, and as such, the support of the public should be sought for any sanitary measures found to be expedient. Inoculating with anti-diphtheria or anti-tetanus serum, or vaccinating against small pox, cannot honestly be advocated as contributing to positive health. But, with these and possibly a few other exceptions, I feel sure that Dr. Batten is right in arguing that the positive rather than the negative attitude to health should form the basis of all hygienic propaganda to the general public. I think, however, that in pointing out the importance of social environment to the health of young people, he rather overstates his case. "Physical environment," he writes, "is probably the least important and most overrated of the factors influencing health. The place in which we live—including soil, climate, and house—governs our state of health far less than what we are or what we do." And elsewhere he says: "The people among whom a child grows up, his parents and, most of all, his mother, have a far greater influence on his development and on his health throughout life than have the place, the house or the room in which he lives."

Neither experience nor a study of statistics leads one to regard material environment as so relatively insignificant a factor in promoting healthy life. Elsewhere, Dr. Batten puts his case more moderately and therefore more effectively: "The bitterest critic of our present social system, the most convinced environmentalist, the warmest advocate of revolution and a new world can hardly deny that bad habits, slovenly thinking, perversity and, perhaps above all, lack of vision, individual, familial and collective, do account for some at least of our missed health; if it were not so, the well-to-do, being economically free, would be radiantly healthy, which they most certainly are not."

Even to-day the public, from whom no secrets are supposed to be hid, is singularly unenlightened in matters of personal health. Much more active educational propaganda is urgently needed. Who are to be the propagandists, the popular educators? I do not think that the best practising physicians and surgeons have either the time or the energy left over to take an active part in this work. Specific technical matters, like anti-diphtheria inoculation, should be dealt with by the medical officers of public health, or under their personal supervision. The more general hygienic propaganda should be based on the positive health ideal and should, in my opinion, be the special task of men and women having a vocation for spreading the gospel of health and a talent for explaining to the ordinary man, woman and youth its fundamental conditions so far as we know them. These hygienic evangelists should, of course, be trained for their particular job. For, to quote one more passage from Dr. Batten's book, "even if his power to prevent or curtail disease were far greater than in fact it is, the doctor would still, and must always, be unable to make a gift of positive good health. It is not by filling the land with 'centres,' by imbuing every member of the medical profession with the 'preventive spirit' and inducing every citizen to resort constantly to doctors, whether at public clinics or in private consulting rooms, that health worthy of the name can be attained."

HARRY ROBERTS

* *Health for the Young*. By Lindsey W. Batten. Allen and Unwin. 6*s*.

THE CHAR

AMONG the many thousands of anglers who take out licences to fish for trout there must be quite a number who are puzzled when they read that the possession of such a licence entitles them also to fish for char. How many of them have seen a char? How many have the faintest idea what kind of a fish he is? How many, indeed, even know where he is to be found, or how he is to be caught? It may be put this way—that the majority of trout fishers, despite the fact that they possess a legal permit to catch char, may spend a lifetime at the waterside without making a nodding acquaintance with this delectable creature. There are several reasons. The first is that the char is one of the rarest of Britain's fresh water fish; the second is that he is limited to lakes, and those only of quite remarkable depth; and the third is that his moods are so little known that scarcely one angler in a thousand has the least idea how to set about catching him.

Yet the char is as interesting as he is beautiful and mysterious, and that he makes one of the daintiest of dishes is a fact known to most epicures. He is found solely in lakes, and his principal home is our English Lake District. I have fished in every county in England and Wales and caught samples of nearly all our native fish, but have never seen or heard of char in any of our rivers. We start, then, from the fact that he is a creature of lakes, and lakes alone. Secondly, he is to be found only in lakes of great depth—as Windermere, Coniston, Wastwater, Haweswater, and a few others of like characteristics. It is as though he cannot live in shallow water. For instance, attempts have been made to acclimatise him in Lake Derwentwater, but without success. When it is added that Derwentwater's average depth is no more than twenty feet the explanation is forthcoming at once. Some of the lakes inhabited by char reach a depth of considerably more than a hundred feet. The char, therefore, is to be looked for only in very deep waters. Then there is the further fact that he is not a surface-moving fish to any great extent. Most of his time he spends at the bottom of the lake. Not for him the playful mood of the trout—cruising about on the surface in search of flies, leaping out of the water in the sunlight and dimpling it with a myriad bubbling

rings as he takes a wandering fly and then turns down to pouch it at his ease. Never once have I seen a char leap out of the water, and only on very rare occasions does the angler see him at the top in quest of surface food.

What we know about him, then, is this—that he is a creature both rare and remote, only seen by the angler at infrequent intervals. In hot weather, after a few spells of sunshine have warmed the water, shoals of char come to the surface. The fishermen are in waiting. At Windermere and Coniston and similar places men used to be posted on church towers or other high buildings. They swept the surface of the lake with field glasses. Sooner or later there was a commotion at the top of the water. "The char's up" would cry the look-out—and then every man with a boat would push out from the shore in hope of making a bag. It must be confessed that the method of fishing would scarcely win the approval of the dry fly expert in southern England, or, indeed, of the trout purist anywhere else. No delicate casting of the fly, either wet or dry; no skilful manipulation of a minnow from the orthodox spinning rod and reel; there is nothing to catch the fancy of the angler who holds that the last word in artistry should be employed in so noble a sport as fishing. A few anglers take a boat and troll the minnow in legitimate fashion, and may enjoy reasonable sport if they chance upon a favourable day, but the method of the professional is based on a technique of his own.

The equipment consists of a couple of rods in each boat, extended over the water on opposite sides. A length of about thirty yards of line is paid out from each rod. At intervals on the line there are "droppers," five or six in number, made up of several yards of line each ending in an imitation fish—not the neatly constructed artificials turned out by the tackle-makers, but often mere bits of bright metal, shaped so that the water gives them a spin and creates a gleam of flashing brilliance. And that is all. The char fasten themselves to these peculiar baits, the tug sets in motion a bell fixed to the rod, and all that the fisherman has to do is to wind in the line and scoop out the fish as they near the boat—taking care that the lines run free and that the captive char is not permitted to foul the other lines still trailing in the water. To be sure, a certain amount of skill is involved in this operation. The novice is almost certain to make a mess of it and to find his three or four lines involved in a hopeless tangle. And that is how the great majority of char are caught in our Lakeland waters. There was a time when an expert could get as many as 250 dozen in a season, but catches like that are almost unknown to-day. Windermere contains the largest char, and Haweswater is the home of the smallest. Taking the district as a whole, the char average about three to the pound. A pounder is much too good for the pan; he is worthy of a gilt-inscribed and glass-fronted mausoleum to deck the angler's home.

For the rest it may be added that as a table delicacy the char is without a peer. Potted char is a term almost synonymous with the Lake District. It may be described as a home industry, and in good seasons it brings in a substantial return. Pots of char are not only sold in waterside villages, but are sent all over the country. Local records abound with references to Westmorland families going up to town for the London season and their agents dispatching by coach the first-caught char to adorn the table of these local squires and landowners. There is, too, a good demand for char by residents and hotelkeepers before the potting stage is reached. In the last few years of John Ruskin's life, when he lived on the shore of Lake Coniston, where house was kept for him at Brantwood by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Severn, I earned the thanks of the family on more than one occasion by taking my first season's catch of char as an offering to "The Professor," as the grand old man was known throughout the countryside. Ruskin was anything but a sportsman, as the word is generally understood, and he used to wonder what we anglers saw in fishing, but that he was fond of a breakfast of char was known to every angler on the lake.

It is a pity the char has such very definite limitations from the sporting point of view and that his instincts do not bid him rise to the fly like his companion the trout. There are times when he may be caught on the fly, but they are so infrequent that it would scarcely be worth the while of even the most persistent fisherman to devote time to his capture by the recognised methods of the angler. He abounds in Lake Haweswater, formerly the private preserve of Lord Lonsdale and now part of the water supply scheme of Manchester Corporation. Until Manchester laid hands on this gracious sheet and began to change it from lake to reservoir, I fished it every year with his lordship's permission. On warm and favourable days, when the trout were in rollicking mood and even a moderate angler could make a bag of thirty and forty in a day, the shoals of trout generally included a sprinkling of char, and he who was lucky to have two and even three fish on his flies at once would be certain, now and again, to find a char among the captives. And when, in the evening, the angler displayed his bag and offered a breakfast to the vicar or the squire, it was noticeable that the char were regarded much more longingly than the trout. The visiting angler who desired to establish good relations with the residents succeeded admirably if he saw that every half-dozen fish he gave away included at least one char. And there is this to be said finally—that if he tastes well the char looks well. In shape and contour he is very much like the trout, except that his lines are finer, that he is not so thickset in the body, and that his head is smaller and has a much more graceful poise. He is a fish of many colours—almost of all colours, and the iridescence of his gleaming coat is something to delight the eye. Indeed, an old boatman's description of him as "a trout in rainbow hues" serves excellently.

ERNEST PHILLIPS

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TRENARREN: AUTUMN 1941

The thunder-green sea
Brings nearer the Island
On which stood the chapel
Of Michael the Archangel.

Smoke from a chimney
In the V-shaped valley,
The voices of children,
A robin on the bough:

Familiar and cheerful
Domestic noises
Speak of contentment
About me now.

But what is to come?
I ask myself, waiting
In this burial-place
Of my ancient people:

The long-headed, dark-faced
Mediterranean
Men who drove prows
Into these inlets:

Confronting the danger
That they too awaited
In the urgent whisper,
The winter sea waiting.

A. L. ROWSE

AS OTHERS SEE US

Le silence est l'expression la plus parfaite de l'éloquence anglaise.

Les Anglais parlent peu des choses qu'ils connaissent. Nous parlons avec éloquence de celles que nous ignorons.

Méfiez-vous d'un Anglais qui a l'air de ne pas comprendre. N'oubliez jamais que les Iles Britanniques furent envahies par les Normands.

Un Anglais ne dit jamais non. Mais quand il le pense c'est pour longtemps.

L'amour des chiens est la rançon du refoulement sexuel et d'une chasteté qui n'est ni vertueuse ni spontanée.

La personnalité de l'Anglais se perd dans le conformisme comme le passant dans le brouillard.

Les Anglais ne souffrent pas du black-out. Ils y sont entraînés par le brouillard. Et il encourage leur perversité.

Si le brouillard n'avait pas existé, les Anglais l'auraient inventé.

Il n'y a rien de nouveau sous le soleil. Il n'y a jamais rien de nouveau en Angleterre: il n'y a pas de soleil.

En Angleterre, les chiens sont plus heureux que les maris. Peut-être sont-ils aussi plus fidèles.

Un Anglais ne remet jamais au lendemain ce qu'il peut faire faire le jour même par un autre.

L'Anglais est l'homme le plus poli du monde. Il ne ferait pas de mal à un lion.

En Angleterre, tout marche à gauche sauf le Labour Party.

Les maisons anglaises sont tellement pareilles, les unes aux autres, qu'il est arrivé à des Anglais de coucher avec la femme de leur voisin sans s'en apercevoir. Elle non plus d'ailleurs.

Les Anglais nous envoient des jockeys. Nous leur envoyons des cuisinières. Ils ont amélioré notre race chevaline. Nous n'avons pas amélioré leur cuisine. Tout le monde mange. Tout le monde ne fait pas de l'équitation.

Le whisky, mélange de teinture d'iode et de punaise écrasée, est funeste à la virilité et à la libido.

Le sport est une excuse à la continence. Les Anglais sont très sportifs.

L'Angleterre est le seul pays du monde où les femmes invoquent l'hygiène comme une excuse à leurs faiblesses charnelles.

Elles prennent un homme comme elles prennent une aspirine.

L'Angleterre est le pays où l'on vend le plus de livres sur la sexualité. Personne n'a jamais appris à nager dans un dictionnaire.

Les Anglais sont tellement orgueilleux qu'ils en sont devenus modestes.

Notre amitié bruyante est souvent affectée. Vaut-elle mieux que l'indifférence dévouée des Anglais?

Rien n'est moins hypocrite que l'hypocrisie anglaise.

Notre badinage permet une dissimulation infiniment plus hermétique.

Les aphorismes sont des mensonges promus au rang des vérités.

A. WAUTERS

PLAYS AND PICTURES

Madame Elena Gerhardt, at the Wigmore Hall

In the dispossessed culture of Europe Elena Gerhardt, like Toscanini, has come to occupy a symbolic position. Both these human beings, whose nobility is felt to be so much more than a reflection of their musical genius, have suffered at the hands of fascism: Toscanini in a series of personal indignities, Mme. Gerhardt in the imprisonment of her husband, an honourable public servant, on charges so preposterous that even the Nazis (this was in their earlier days) were compelled to release him. Incapable of compromise with the enemies of humanity and the humanities, both have chosen—although under no racial compulsion—to abandon their native countries, the one for America, the other (to our great gain) for England. What such an uprooting must mean to artists so saturated in their national traditions an outsider can only guess. But the exile of Elena Gerhardt may well seem even more bitter than the exile of Arturo Toscanini. He is the most distinguished exponent of a Mediterranean culture which neither twenty years of fascism nor two of an ignoble war have been able to kill. From Rome or from Milan one still may hear passionate and even highly finished performances of Verdi and, what is more, fine new works in the ample Italianate manner. But the Nazi youth and their leaders have turned their backs on the whole nineteenth-century world of German *lieder* as well as on the homely, sweet and often sentimental ethic that lay behind it. Herein lies the poignance of one of Mme. Gerhardt's war-time recitals; one seems to catch in the overtones of her voice the echo of a whole century of German culture.

At the National Gallery she has won for herself a public which hardly knew her before the war; last Saturday she returned to the Wigmore Hall in her first full-length recital for a considerable time. The programme—a group each of Schubert, Brahms and Hugo Wolf—contained much that was unfamiliar even to her admirers and nothing that was not of the first order. Moreover, its composition was most felicitous; for example the juxtaposition in the Brahms group, of the wintry *Auf dem Kirchofe* and the warm sunshine of *Bei dir sind meine Gedanken*. That the style, in everything from Schubert's tremendous *Die Allmacht* to Wolf's exquisite miniature *Auch kleine Dinge*, was impeccable—that goes without saying. But one might reasonably have felt some anxiety as to the state of her voice. There was a time, some years ago, when it seemed that her energy and disdain for caution might tear it to pieces. Fortunately our fears proved groundless; not for years has she been in such easy voice. Wisely she has now resigned herself to a contralto's range, transposing many songs down a tone lower than before; moreover she makes a more consummate use than ever of that famous "*da lontano*" *mezza voce*. No voice is more packed with character; as for the occasional asperities and the moments of false intonation, they are as yet no more than the wrinkles on a face that one loves.

"The Little Foxes," at the Piccadilly

Those who saw the film will be disappointed. Miss Fay Compton isn't Miss Bette Davis; accents are English, not native; the *longueurs* of the opening dinner party and the tendency to wooden melodrama are exaggerated on the stage; there is no cameraman of genius to provide angles and pick out a concealed sneer: *The Little Foxes*, in fact, at the Piccadilly Theatre is slow, uncertain, crude rather than emphatic in its effects. Yet with all these faults, it works up an uneasy excitement and shocks sufficiently to make us wonder how many among the audience are themselves "little foxes" who have found vineyards to spoil. The merit of the play is that the implicit sermon against big business is left unspoken; and how unpleasant, how dramatic, how in the end self-destructive these destroyers can be is the feeling with which we leave the theatre. Miss Fay Compton gives a performance of icy harshness; she makes us admire and detest Regina, and only lacks the fascination brought by Miss Davis to the part. On the whole, agreeable characters come off rather better than the villainous: the pathetic and tipsy Birdie (Mary Merrall) and Regina's daughter (Dulcie Gray) who ends by defying her ruthless elders. The one point in which this production improves on Hollywood is in Birdie's breakdown and confession: this seemed stagey in the film, but on the stage is natural and touching.

THE MOVIES

"Leningrad Fights," at the Plaza
"Natasha," at the Tatler
M.O.I. Films
"The Magnificent Dope," at the Odeon
"Across the Pacific," at the Regal

Views of the city (it might be the beginning of a travel film) dissolve and the loudspeakers at street corners announce Hitler's invasion of Russia. The epic story of Leningrad that follows we know distantly from many angles of print, but the black and white of the camera takes us to the spot. Women digging trenches in the suburbs, soldiers and tanks in the streets, the air blitz, factories pouring out shells, armoured trains in the countryside and cruisers in the bay adding their weight to the defence, and the city itself still intact despite battering: these are the everyday sights of the greatest siege in modern history. The film brings home what we have known but never felt, the terror of winter. Snow wraps the ruins; all traffic ceases; water has to be dug for in holes in the ice; the bread ration, weighed in scales and carried away in the hand, is a few meagre ounces; a passer-by stops to uncover the face of a man who has died on the pavement; over everything desolation and loveliness of snow, and a mumbling of guns. If, after all, Leningrad had fallen, these pictures would be unbearable in their tragedy. But the fortress holds, airplanes bring supplies, the lorries string out over the Baltic; Spring comes to thaw the city squares and the war. The drama of this newsreel (lasting just under an hour) makes any fiction in the cinemas this week look rather silly.

Natasha is the story of a Red Cross nurse on the Leningrad front and springs from the material of the newsreel. The scenes in a field hospital behind the lines and on the battlefield itself are brilliantly actual: here, once more, are the white ghosts crawling up to attack, the guerilla ambushes, the tanks and armoured trains reconnoitring. Thin little love story, a melodramatic tinge in the rescues, English dialogue that doesn't always improve things; still, it's the material that counts, and this is authentic.

The latest batch of M.O.I. films includes a new triumph by Crown Film Unit. *We Sail At Midnight*, halfway between short and feature lengths, is worth looking for in future programmes. It tells a story such as we might get from a "March of Time" reel, but it goes far beyond the journalism of the "March of Time" in using facts to stir the imagination. Under Lend-Lease a shipment of machine tools from America has to be made at top speed to enable a factory in Birmingham to work on a new tank. The delivery on time—finding the tools, transporting them to the quayside, catching the convoy which sails at midnight—is as exciting as any car chase, and the pictorial and musical devices by which excitement is conveyed are remarkable. There are some lovely shots of New York, of lorries in Broadway, of the convoy moving in Indian file at dusk; and the loveliness is not merely a decoration, but the most persuasive and dramatic presentation of the theme. Director, Julian Spiro. Another film in the same batch—a Strand Film production, showing the work of C.E.M.A.—is also notable for pictorial liveliness and the unexpected play of imagination.

Two light pieces from Hollywood. "Develop your Personality, Learn in twenty lessons to be a Success"—the Courses that advertise themselves with such slogans are agreeably satirised in *The Magnificent Dope*. A money prize and a Course are offered to the least go-getting man in the States, and the winner turns out to be not so much the Greatest Failure as the Happiest Man. Mr. Fonda makes a very good showing in a Gary Cooper part, and the film, though not dazzling, is enjoyable and civilised.

Across the Pacific echoes the successes of *The Maltese Falcon*: same director (John Huston), same stars (Bogart, Mary Astor, Henry Greenstreet), brilliant camera work, a story that, alas, can't even be taken seriously enough. Good pot-boiler.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

Correspondence

VANSITTARTISM

SIR,—Mr. Rowse writes "Nazism is the culmination, if at the same time the degradation, of the dominant German tradition of the past two centuries. Hence its tremendous strength. . . . The Russians realise this perfectly well, and are quite right about the Germans. They *know*."

Stalin's manifesto to the Red Army of February 23rd, 1942, contains the following passage: "Sometimes the foreign press engages in prattle to the effect that the Red Army's aim is to exterminate the German people and destroy the German State. This, of course, is a stupid lie and a senseless slander of the Red Army. The Red Army has not and cannot have any such idiotic aims. . . . It is very likely that the war for the liberation of our Soviet land will result in the ousting or destruction of Hitler's clique. We would welcome such an outcome. But it would be ridiculous to identify Hitler's clique with the German people and the German State. The experience of history shows that Hitlers come and go, whereas the German people and the German State remain."

Soviet propaganda—of which interesting accounts appear in *Soviet War News*—is based throughout on this distinction between the German people and the Nazi regime and on preaching the message that the German people can dissociate themselves from the crimes of their rulers when, but only when, they rise in revolution against them. For the U.S.S.R. will treat a revolutionary Germany as a friend, but will insist on the utter destruction of the Nazi regime and of the class structure out of which it grew and whose tradition it incarnates.

The Russians, in short, not only recognise the abhorrent nature of the Nazi regime and the strength of the German tradition of which it is the culmination. They go a step farther and recognise that this national tradition is rooted in the German governing class and can be uprooted only by a thorough-going social revolution which will divide up the estates of the Junker landlords among the peasants and put the banks, industries, trade and transport of Germany in the hands of a State dominated by the German workers and their allies.

If Mr. Rowse really agrees with the Russians in all this, he should stop calling himself a Vansittartite, for the Vansittartites and the Russians are on opposite sides of the barricade on the fundamental issue of social revolution. If, on the other hand, Mr. Rowse disagrees with the passage quoted above from Stalin's manifesto and with the Russian belief that social revolution is the way to cure the danger of German militarism and Fascism, he is a good Vansittartite, but should not invoke the Russians in justification of his position.

ROTH WILLIAMS

Flat 801, The White House,
Albany Street, N.W.1.

SIR,—Mr. Justin Steinfeld's memory has misled him. The resolution which aroused Mr. Wells's opposition at the P.E.N. Congress in Prague in 1938 had nothing to do with a "protest against Nazi Germany, and especially against those authors and writers who were at the service of the Nazi regime." The resolution which caused the shindy, of which the text is before me, was one which called upon the Congress to condemn "the anti-semitism and racism propaganded in certain countries." In Mr. Wells's opinion we had no right to interfere with the expression of any point of view, however much we might disagree with it. "There was a Frenchman called Gobineau and an Englishman called Houston Chamberlain who played a great role in the development of anti-semitism; but if their books were banned, I should be the first to defend them," he said. Somebody pointed out—I think it was the writer of this letter—that, although Mr. Wells was undoubtedly right in his interpretation of the function of the P.E.N., nevertheless if he voted against the resolution his action would certainly lead to his being dubbed anti-semite in the press of the world. There was a pause in the proceedings during which M. Jules Romains and others wrestled with Mr. Wells, and a text was finally prepared which he accepted. Here it is: "The 16th Congress of the International P.E.N.

solemnly declares that it is opposed to all persecutions on account of race, culture or opinion, such as the anti-semitic persecution of the past few years."

The Porch, Tring, Herts. HERMON OULD, International Secretary

RONALD KIDD

SIR,—The name of Ronald Kidd is synonymous with the National Council for Civil Liberties, for it was he who, in February, 1934, founded the Council, and the remainder of his life was devoted to its work.

On his death earlier this year his friends and associates felt that the public would welcome the opportunity to express their appreciation for the work to which Ronald Kidd sacrificed himself and to help in its development by contributing to a memorial which should take the following forms:

(1) A memorial plaque for the offices of the Council.

(2) A fund for the publication of educational pamphlets.

(3) Prizes to young people for an essay on some aspect of Civil Liberty.

(4) Contributions for the General Purposes of the Council.

All contributions, whether large or small, will be warmly welcomed, and they may be earmarked for one or more of the objects of the Fund. They should be sent to: The Rt. Hon. Lord Faringdon, Hon. Treasurer, "Memorial Fund," National Council for Civil Liberties, 11A King's Road, Sloane Square, S.W.3. M. I. CORBETT ASHBY AND OTHERS

CARELESS PROOF READING

SIR,—Glancing through my article on the Tuberculosis Report in your issue of October 17th, I notice a statistical misstatement which, through carelessness, I failed to notice when reading the proof. I state that the tuberculosis death rate at the beginning of this century was over 17,000 per million living. It was, of course, over 17,000 per ten million living. So, also, with the figure given for 1936. The ratio between the two is correctly given. I am glad that no reader seems to have spotted the rather obvious error, and that I, the perpetrator, am also the discoverer. I apologise.

HARRY ROBERTS

FRIENDLY ITALIANS

SIR,—When he speaks of it as "already pro-fascist and dependent," Mr. Gino Calzolari is surely doing less than justice to the Albania of 1938. Working in an extremely difficult position, desperately short of funds, yet unable to raise a loan through either the League of Nations or any major Power, King Zog was more or less driven into the arms of Italy. How adroitly he manœuvred, exacting the greatest possible advantage from each concession, will be familiar to readers of Mr. Vandeleur Robinson's full and recent account in *Albania's Road to Freedom*. Zog's policy was clearly to play for time; and probably it was bound to fail ultimately. But it was not his fault that the low tone (and blindness) of European politics in the pre-Munich days left him no alternative. Zog was no Quisling and Albania no more pro-fascist than Carthage was pro-Roman in the years between the Second and Third Punic Wars. That Albania was dependent may be true, economically; but the resistance of Whitsuntide 1939, and the guerilla fighting which still goes on, show that the spirit of the people has not been "gleichegschaltet."

These distinctions are important when we are speaking of a "far-off country of which we know nothing," and which is still not recognised as one of the United Nations. Friends of Albania have already welcomed the statement of the Free Italy Movement that it acknowledges her right to independence; and it is a splendid omen when an Albanian speaker appears on the same platform with anti-fascist Italians. But even more welcome, because it would remove a greater danger, would be a similar pronouncement from the Greek Government. F. W. WALBANK

The University, Liverpool.

SIR,—The contents of your correspondence on the subject of "Friendly Italians" in your issue of October 24th has caused us some concern.

Must we understand that to command official confidence the activities of Anti-fascist Italians in this country should be purely non-political, and would anyone kindly illuminate our minds on the exact meaning of *non-political anti-fascism?*

Dr. Pettoello's statement that "Italian immigration . . . in this island has been left to find its own feet" must be the outcome of his incomplete knowledge of Italian anti-fascism in England, otherwise he would know that from 1922 to 1938–40, although with scanty favour or sympathy from authoritative quarters, a certain number of Italians have persistently attempted to expose the Fascist Plague, but were rewarded with political, social and economic boycott looked upon as political untouchables and occasionally featured as a "sinister brotherhood plotting in London to murder Mussolini."

We are decidedly in favour of pleasure sharing in literature, art and music, but we strongly doubt the possibility of defeating Fascism with mixed unpolitical gatherings singing "O sole mio." F. GALASSO,

The President of the Federazione

24 Queensberry Place, S.W.7. Antifascista Italiana

FRIENDLY ALIENS

SIR,—It is quite time that common sense came in to support humanity. Many hundred useful workers for freedom are still interned; many more are refused work on munitions and in the Armed Forces "because they are aliens." Meanwhile, we recruit for our armies and munitions factories Irish and other Fascists "because they are British." No sane man can suppose the latter the less dangerous. It all comes from the old-fashioned conception of a National War.

Years ago we disliked foreigners coming in because they "took the bread out of British workers' mouths." That was humbug at the time, for every new immigrant "made" as much work as he "took." Still, that was the excuse before we began to take this war seriously. Now surely we understand that we want men and women to work for us, whatever their colour, race, or creed—that we have not got enough.

Besides the hundreds on the side of liberty whom we have concentrated and segregated, there are still thousands of other such aliens desiring to escape with their lives and hands from Hitler—to come here and work for us instead of being conscripted to work against us. Still, our Foreign Office and our Home Office refuse asylum and drive back labour into Hitler's net. They allow into this country some quite dangerous Fascists, and prevent Frenchmen and Jews, flying from France and Rumania and Hitler's slave-battalions, from coming to our side to be useful.

I protest that this attitude is senseless as well as inhuman. If it pays the Germans to make their enemies work as slaves, it surely would pay us to let our friends work as free men. The Americans draw no such ridiculous distinctions. They can divide friends from enemies, they can use friendly aliens in the Military and Civil Service. So can the Russians. Why cannot we? WEDGWOOD

THE HOUSE WITH THE GREEN SHUTTERS

SIR,—Can anyone give me first-hand information about George Douglas Brown? I want to write a "Life" of one of Scotland's real geniuses.

Festiniog, N. Wales. A. S. NEILL

PLANS FOR LONDON

SIR,—In your somewhat harsh criticism of the Royal Academy Planning Committee's efforts at Burlington House, you rightly say that "proper account must be taken of the wishes of the population."

Town Planning formed the subject of a recent ABCA issue, and it was interesting, though disappointing, to find that the overwhelming majority

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'The idea of *Winter Solstice* is attractive, the sudden cure of a young woman who has been bedridden for nine years, and her gradual recovery of every detail in her wilfully forgotten past. There are powerful descriptions of places, accidents, and jealousy.' *The Observer*
JONATHAN CAPE

of men stated their preference for semi-detached houses, rather than for flats. This being the case, it is difficult to see how the "eczema of jerry-built villas" is to be cured (except so far as improved construction is concerned). DAVID LOWLES

"Midhope," Strathpeffer, Ross-shire.

[It is largely because they have had experience only of ill-constructed flats, that so many prefer houses. But we were at pains to insist that those who wanted houses should not be forced into flats. With good town-planners, architects and builders, suburban housing need be neither flimsy nor unsightly.—ED., *N.S. and N.*].

BLOCKADE AND EUROPEAN RESISTANCE

SIR,—During months of military training in this country, I have been able to gather some information on the situation in Belgium and other occupied countries, and to discuss this question with fellow officers and men. It occurs to me that your readers might be interested in conclusions reached in the course of these conversations, with regard to the consequences of a strict application of the blockade.

(1) Goering's recent declarations made evident that in its neglect of its lawful and moral obligations to feed the civilian populations the Third Reich has found a powerful weapon with which to break the spirit of the people, and drive them gradually into economic co-operation. The abolition of the dole has already compelled a large number of unemployed to work in Germany, in order to save their families from starvation, thus releasing a corresponding number of German workers for the front. With regard to the desperate situation of women and children in Belgium, our information entirely confirms that appeal of the Swedish Committee published in the *Times* of October 11th.

(2) Pro-Nazi propaganda in the occupied countries is using the blockade as a means to rouse anti-British feeling. The bulk of the people have enough common sense to see through such manœuvres, but if the war is unduly prolonged, it is to be feared that resistance will be gradually replaced by a feeling of discouragement which will prevent them from preparing the way for the armies of liberation.

(3) We are thus forced to the conclusion that both the economic and political interests of the United Nations suffer from the strict application of the blockade, and that our common war effort would be increased and not decreased if a limited supply of food and medicaments were allowed to enter certain occupied countries, provided their distribution could be sufficiently controlled.

Should the Nazis lay hands on these imports, the slight advantage which they would derive from this action would by no means outweigh the disadvantage incurred through the popular reaction it would provoke.

In conclusion, we are inclined to think that the problem has hitherto been considered either on humanitarian or on economic grounds without sufficiently taking into account its political aspect—that is to say, the secret struggle pursued by those who oppose a determined resistance to Nazi rule, and that the time has come to re-examine it in this new light.

LIEUT. L. COUVREUR

W.E.A.

SIR,—I was interested in the article by A. M. in last week's issue, with regard to the educational task of the Labour Party, and noted that in paying a tribute to the way in which the Labour Party had fulfilled this function up to 1914, the writer inferred that it had done this through its affiliated groups "of which, in the sphere of education, the W.E.A. and the Fabian Society were pre-eminent."

I was not quite clear whether the writer really intended to convey that the W.E.A. was, or had been at any time affiliated to the Labour Party, but I should like to make it quite clear that while the W.E.A. has been proud to be of service to the Labour Movement, its constitution precludes it from affiliating to any other organisation. While it believes, profoundly, in the importance of political education, and provides it, it proclaims itself as a non-party political organisation and it has refused to accept the affiliation of National political parties because it desires that its policy shall not be influenced by party-political considerations.

ERNEST GREEN,
General Secretary,
Workers' Educational Association

HOUSEHOLD DIFFICULTIES

SIR,—Childless married women are being rebuked daily over the wireless and in the newspapers for not voluntarily offering to do whole- or half-time work outside their homes. I believe it is about time that some of those responsible for making women's present household problems *unnecessarily* difficult should receive some of this public censure.

I live in a modern block of flats admirably designed to release all the childless women in it for full-time outside work. But the owners do not feel it is their patriotic duty to offer the minimum of co-operation that would make this easy.

There is the little question of laundry. You can leave it downstairs in an unlocked telephone booth in a frequently deserted lobby on your own responsibility—or else. So your laundry gets stolen, as mine and others has been. There is a faint chance that red tape may eventually grant you some coupons, but no one the cost of the articles stolen. The owners admits that because they refuse to buy a lock and provide half an hour a week of the staff's time, at present sixty people must either risk frequent losses of laundry or take fifteen minutes a week out of business hours to walk to the nearest laundry. Of course the easier solution is to stay home and wait, often several days, until the laundry calls.

Incidentally a minimum of five laundries and five newspaper boys deliver to this building. What a waste of petrol and man-power! Certainly four of the newspaper boys would be more usefully employed delivering food for the women out at work.

The average housewife does not live in a flat, and the unnecessary difficulties she is facing to-day cannot be solved quite as easily as in this instance. But they are solvable with a little will and intelligence. A start could be made by telling the owners of blocks of flats that "there's a war on" means not an excuse for non-cooperation, but a duty to cooperate.

KITTY WINTRINGHAM

FUTURE OF BURMA

SIR,—It is reported how the Indian leader, Mr. Gopalacharia, linked up the question of independence for India with the proposed allied offensive in Burma, and said that it would be a mistake to attack in Burma without a clear understanding about the future of the people of Burma.

Since the Cripps offer to India there has been so far no authoritative pronouncement regarding the status of Burma after the war, though in the past Burma was always promised and given the same status as India. But Burma is "remarkably uniform in race, language and religion" (Simon Commission Report, 1930, Vol. I, p. 79), and "there is no fundamental difference between the political parties as to the conception of her constitutional future" (Mr. Joyce, Public Relations Officer, India and Burma Office).

The last occasion a statement on the subject was made was on November 5th, 1941, by the Secretary of State for India and Burma, Mr. Amery, when he said, "It is to that high position of Dominion status that we wish to help Burma to attain as fully and completely after the victorious conclusion of the war," if the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Atlee's, passing reference in the course of a recent debate in Parliament on India that the people of Burma "would regain their country, and with their country their full freedom," is not to be regarded as one. MAUNG OHN

10 Windmill Lane,
Appleton (nr. Warrington), Cheshire

Dark Testament
PETER ABRAHAMS

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

It is exactly a hundred years since an obscure Liberal paper, appearing in Central France, published a serial which was to retain a permanent place in French literature: now that a century has passed, Claude Tillier's *Mon Oncle Benjamin* can safely be pronounced in its minor way a classic. Yet rarely was centenarian born in less auspicious circumstances. Tillier, a needy provincial journalist, was then harassed by professional and private worries, as well as by the incessant attacks of his many political enemies; he was already stricken with the disease which was to carry him off two years later; besides, he had written nothing except articles and pamphlets; and had the rag he edited been rich enough to pay a real serialist, he would very likely never have attempted fiction. Altogether, the sprightliness of *Mon Oncle Benjamin* appears no less astonishing than its longevity.

True, it is no more than half fiction. Benjamin Rathery did really exist, and was Tillier's great-uncle. After half a century, the people of Clamecy still remembered the pranks, practical jokes and witty sayings of their eccentric medico. It is, in the first place, from oral tradition that Tillier derived his general conception of the character, and many of the incidents he introduced into his novel and combined with others borrowed from local folklore. He has piously enriched his uncle's career with the feats of the town's wags, with traits of sawbones' humour, with the tall stories pedlars would tell in taverns. None of this, of course, is new; but the very staleness of many episodes is turned to account, and to them the book owes much of its life. It would not be so rich if it sprang simply from one man; it belongs in fact to a whole class of society, to that lower middle-class of the French provinces which has remained, for centuries, so extraordinarily true to itself and to its jokes. *Mon Oncle Benjamin* draws its sap from that ageless social humus.

Such a composite piece of work, done by fits and starts, cannot of course pretend to structural unity. Its plot—will Benjamin marry Melle Minxit?—is of the loosest kind. But it would be unfair to judge as a *roman d'intrigue* what is primarily a *roman d'aventures*. It comprises the prison scene of the typical picaresque novel, the duel and the elopement of the "cape-and-rapier" romance; and in comparison with the masterpieces of the genre to which it rightly belongs, it appears better built, and more closely knit than most. Its hero is not a traveller, such as Gil Blas had been, and Sigognac was to be. He has not got to seek adventure on the highways, for adventure comes to seek him in his small native town; it happens where he is, as if it sprang from him. What it manifests is not so much the fickleness of fate as the permanent nature of a man.

> My uncle Benjamin was the gayest, the funniest, the wittiest man in all the country round; and he would have been . . . (how shall I put it?) . . . he would have been the least abstinent if the town-crier, a certain Cicero, had not shared his glory.

Do not, however, mistake him for a common drunkard; he is "an epicurean who carries philosophy to the point of intoxication." His patients chiefly belong to the class that has no money for doctors, but if he happens to receive payment, he hastens to spend the money at Manette's, in loud carousing with his boon companions. Like his best friend M. Minxit, Benjamin "looks upon life as a farce" in which wisdom orders that each man should act his part as gaily as possible. To play pranks is their common delight. What a joy for Benjamin to pose as a barrister, and eat a good meal at a litigant's expense, or to palm himself off as the Wandering Jew on the people of a nearby village. Unforeseen difficulties only stimulate his resourcefulness, and his glib tongue is always ready with a plausible tale or specious argument to extricate him from a tight corner. In less than no time his rhetoric transmutes a threatening creditor into a meek and apologetic debtor, or his devilish casuistry places an arrogant village priest in an insoluble dilemma. But of all his memorable rejoinders and flashes of wit, the best are probably those aimed at the gentry, whose haughty insolence rouses his commoner's pride.

> Mr. Rathery (the Red Musketeer said), Mr. Surgeon Rathery, do you know that between our two professions there is a closer analogy than you think. I am willing to bet my sorrel horse against your red coat that you've killed more people this year than I did in my last campaign.
>
> You would win (my uncle answered icily), for this year, I have had the misfortune of losing one of my patients. He died yesterday of anthrax.

The cold, detached epigrammatic manner is Benjamin's favourite, and it is also Tillier's, in the passages where he chatters in his own name, and no longer through his uncle's mouth. His best traits have a veiled splendour, and half their charm lies in their discretion. Let us quote one or two:

> Napoleon, *who was very fond of recruits*, said the woman he liked best was the one who had most children.
>
> As a magistrate, Monsieur le Bailli was not a very commendable sort of person. He understood law quite well, but when it said something he disliked, *he just didn't listen.*

Uncle and nephew have much in common, including a remarkable gift of the gab; and the reader hardly notices the change when one of them runs dry and the other carries on. Together they keep up a sort of running commentary on life; the tiniest incident provides them with an excuse to philosophise; they have opinions on every subject, and can always, moreover, improvise some on the spur of the moment. They chatter in turn on the frailty of human grandeur, on the hazards of history, on the relative value of intelligence and knowledge, on duels, on freedom, on prison reform, on the selfishness and vanity of the great; they discuss the rightfulness of heritage and the origin of the Gospels. None of this is quite orthodox; and what is not commonplace is too often paradoxical. Also, the arguments brought forward are more piquant than really sound, and ludicrous comparisons are repeatedly palmed off as demonstrations. And yet, once these reservations have been made about the value of this "philosophy" as such, the manner of it remains delightful, rich in unexpected grades and malicious liveliness. It is not necessary to be interested in the comparative birth-rates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to enjoy Tillier's considerations on the subject:

> Respectable ladies produce no more; they make themselves barren for the sake of economy. When the clerk's wife has borne a clerklet, and the notary's wife a diminutive notary, they consider they are quits with mankind, and they abdicate. . . . The fact is that children are very expensive; only the poor can afford a large family. But during the last century, things were quite different. It was the golden age of accoucheurs and midwives. Women abandoned themselves to their instincts without fear or second thought; rich and poor alike, they were all busily bearing children, even those who had no right to do so.

Those considerations are, of course, a pure digression; they were not needed to make the reader admit that Mme. Mâchecourt had seven children before she was thirty.

The incoherence of ideas adds to the general effect of carefree casualness. *Mon Oncle Benjamin* is quite the reverse of a novel with a purpose, and one could not consider it as such without immediately coming up against irreducible contradictions. How can a passionate champion of the Rights of Man maintain that, considering the preventive role of punishment, it is better to condemn ten innocents than to let one criminal escape? Why protest against social inequalities, if one believes that "each station in life has its own pleasures," and that "in the long run, the beggar and the rich man get the same amount of happiness"? Such blatant inconsistency is not a mere matter of detail, of expediency in argumentation. The whole book is founded upon a contradiction. It is a tender and idealised picture of pre-revolutionary provincial France, by a spiritual son of the Jacobins—by a "proletarian" who has not forgiven the Orleaniste bourgeoisie for stealing the people's Trois-Glorieuses—by a true *quarante-huitard* (though he never saw '48). The eighteenth century, he writes, was no worse than ours; "The people wore shackles, but they danced in them, and made them rattle like castanets." What is the good of revolutions if happiness "always keeps company with servitude"? Does Tillier not see that he is giving arms to his adversaries? It is obvious that he generalises unduly, and attributes to the whole of French society under the old regime a way of life that belonged exclusively to the artisans and tradespeople of the towns. What makes him thus idealise the eighteenth century is that he unconsciously seeks shelter in it from the ugliness of his own period. He is sick of the smug and pompous selfishness of the bourgeoisie flourishing under Louis-Philippe's umbrella; he hates what he calls "the constitutional man." Hence the mischievous pleasure he finds in exaggerating the contrast between the two periods, in answering the nostalgic appeal of the "easy-going age" when social life was still "stamped with a charming negligence and most delightful simplicity." In short, *Mon Oncle Benjamin* belongs to the literature of sentimental escape.

What makes it an artistic success is the harmony of matter and style. Depicting the manners of the eighteenth century (such, at least, as he imagined them to have been) Tillier has recaptured the expression and tone of the period; and he has recaptured them, not through conscious effort, but through innate sympathy. His book is not a painstaking exercise in literary "reconstitution"—a parody, like Balzac's *Contes Drôlatiques*; it is the work of a man who, while retaining the advantage of distance, belongs to his subject. His masters were Lesage, Diderot Sterne; and above all Voltaire, to whom he owes, not only his general outlook upon human affairs, but also his way of writing, and of telling a tale. And yet to label him as a belated Voltarian is to miss about half of him; it leaves out the tenderness that mitigates his irony. All his characters have one quality in common, and that is kindness; even his tyrannical squires are more stupid than really bad at heart. M. Minxit never recovers from the blow his daughter's death has dealt him; and even Benjamin's gaiety, Tillier says,

> proved powerless to overcome this incurable melancholy. M. Minxit answered his jokes only with a wan and sorrowful smile, as if to say that he understood, and was grateful for the kind intention.

The eighteenth century echo, in such a sentence, is no longer that of witty tellers of "philosophical" tales; it is that of Rousseau, of sentiment, of faith in the essential goodness of man.

LOUIS TILLIER

LE MOI EST HAÏSSABLE?

Ego 5. By JAMES AGATE. *Harrap.* 18*s.*

"He combines the wit of Talleyrand and the discrimination of Baudelaire with the learning of Macaulay and the vitality of Balzac"—that is how caution counsels me to summarise Mr. Agate's abilities. For he is no less truculent than touchy: a downright critic, he winces at criticism of himself, and treasures his resentment. The withers of this war-horse, like the hands of Mrs. Siddons, are perpetually being wrung. (One has noticed before that the fatter the success the thinner the skin.) Accordingly Mr. Agate in *Ego* 5 belabours THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION: we have been inadequately applausive. But I have no quarrel with him; for if he has insulted my friends, he has been equally abusive of persons I dislike; and in any case I cannot, as a journalist, withhold my stupefied admiration. Mr. Agate writes about a thousand words a day—and is never dull.

The strain tells, however. And when he groans alternately over his critics and the collectors of his surtax, there does seem a method of escaping simultaneously from both these afflictions. He

would pay less tax if he wrote less; if he wrote less, he might write even better; and if he wrote even better, he would be less liable, and probably less sensitive, to detraction. Moreover, he would be able sometimes to read. He has acquired the habit of piling up his shop window with a flashing display of quotations and allusions—and personally I cannot help taking to a man with such a cult for Boswell and Balzac. But one is not certain that he ever renews his stock. He has not yet found time to read Proust, whom he is eminently fitted to appreciate. And behind the showcases one sometimes catches a glimpse of other, of quite portentous, voids. When Mr. Agate asserts that Virginia Woolf did not possess "one vestige" of humour, he is merely advertising the fact that he has read her books very little and very carelessly. Again, "There is more honesty," he informs us, "in Roosevelt's little finger or Churchill's little toe than in the whole of the G.O.M.'s body"; so silly a judgment on Mr. Gladstone can result from nothing but ignorance.

He continues to divert our eyes from these chasms by an endearing braggadocio.

> Came across this witty thing from the *Saturday Review* in its palmy days of fifty years ago. It said of some legal luminary that he had "all the qualities of a great judge—he was slow, he was courteous, he was wrong." This is the opposite of me, who am rapid, rude and right.

This is a good joke. Unluckily one gets the impression that Mr. Agate, not continually, but now and then, does believe in his own infallibility. Assurance sits on him like a silk hat on an undertaker: it is a part of his trade. But could he not chuck it on the peg, when he gets back from Fleet Street, and dwindles into a diarist?

In the last sentence of his books he invites us to judge him by what he attempts and not by something we should have preferred him to attempt. This is a criterion he refuses to apply to others.

> *I am not, and never have been, a critic.* According to received opinion a critic is a person who puts himself in the artist's place, sees the problem as it presented itself to the artist, and decides how far the artist has succeeded. *Je m'en fiche de tout cela.* I care nothing for problems and how they have been solved; I am a taster, not a schoolmaster allotting marks.

The italics are Mr. Agate's—and so is the French. The interest of this passage is that it explains candidly, not to say boastfully, why we have cause to consider him something less than a critic. What, then, is he? A virtuoso performer, I suggest. He writes of Bernhardt always with an enthusiasm based upon fellow-feeling. He has found in many great actresses a quality he thinks is not accidental, "overweening, ferocious egotism." His own merits, no less than his defects, appear to depend upon the same quality. Like a great actress he has built up a public personality (what the psychologists call a *persona*) so industriously that he can never now escape from it. A judge of hackneys and an enthusiast for Duparc, he simultaneously stuns the plain man with a load of erudition and affects to be a plain man himself. If he would hate to be called a highbrow, he must be considered at the least an upper-middle brow. A too busy pen may make excessive demands upon his supply of gusto, but this never gives out; and while many men, and women, are no less egotistic than Mr. Agate, precious few are a quarter so entertaining. I hope, therefore, that he will continue to amaze, amuse, and exasperate us with many further exercises in self-exploitation.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

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AN ENGLISH CONSERVATIVE LOOKS AT FRANCE

A Short History of France. By SIR J. A. R. MARRIOTT. *Methuen.* 15s.

"To sketch in brief compass the *political* development of France, excluding . . . all reference to its literature, art, and general culture" is a task which verges on the paradoxical. To exclude also, to all intents and purposes, any reference to recent economic history is even more serious. If Sir John Marriott is on the whole to be thanked by "the general reader anxious to familiarise himself with the evolution of France, more particularly as compared or contrasted with the evolution of England," yet his book bears the penalty of its too restricted design. The experiment of unfolding, without reference to other aspects of French life, the tale of France's political formation, of her various rulers' fight to reach and hold her "natural frontiers," of her people's efforts to find their political and administrative balance, interesting though it is, remains unconvincing, especially in the latter half of the book.

The facts are there, skilfully arrayed; a spate of misprints and a few minor inaccuracies can be forgiven in wartime; this *Short History of France* certainly leaves the reader who ponders over the last three chapters under the impression that a political entity called France has a vital part to play in the stabilisation and pacification of Europe at the side of Downing Street. There is much for the English reader to learn and remember about some seemingly permanent political characteristics of the French nation; for instance, that lack of a sense of the common interests of all classes, which was already noticeable among the privileged orders at the States General of Orleans (1560), and which so surprised Arthur Young in 1789. The contrast between the process of rigid administrative centralisation, begun by Colbert and perfected by Napoleon, with the extreme individualism of a nation where "spiritual families" rather than parties are the natural groupings, will not appear so clearly: the reader has to fill in the picture, of which the historian, adhering strictly to his original design, has provided only the frame.

It would be unfair to say that he has left out the Prince of Denmark: yet I for one do miss the hero of the History of France as I was taught it, the People of France. Kings succeed kings, and one constitution follows another, with but little reference to the reactions of the governed and with constant emphasis on the purely technical aspects of government, on war and on diplomacy. No wonder that Sir John Marriott reveals a discreet but marked predilection for the line of kings who welded the provinces into France, as opposed not only to the spendthrift Louis XV but to the popular, universalist spirit of the Revolution as expressed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The only exception, a revealing one, to his self-imposed rule of excluding all reference to general culture, is an inadequate chapter on "The Ascendancy of France—French literature and art in the seventeenth century." And so the reader is left under the impression that Calvin, but not Rabelais or Montaigne, represents French thought in the Sixteenth Century; that political instability is France's contribution to the history of the nineteenth century, whereas her gifts to the world in art, literature and science between 1815 and 1940 equal if they do not surpass anything she had produced before, and are much more closely related to the true spirit of her people.

Sir John Marriott never quotes Michelet, that most intuitive of France's historians; he occasionally follows Carlyle, whose intuitions are so frequently wrong, in interpretations of scenes of the Revolution; this admittedly rough and ready criterion does illustrate how and where his book falls short of to-day's urgent need: to explain the French people to their British neighbours. This country enjoys the inestimable advantages of stable, well-founded political institutions, safely entrenched behind the moat; it is too easily tempted to look with some commiseration at such puzzling national characteristics of the French as their recent political instability, forgetting that foreign invasions have repeatedly shaken the very foundations of government by the people for the people, and have repeatedly revealed treason among the great feudal lords or their modern successors. The political instability of the last forty years cannot be understood unless it is related to the economic trends of the age, to the concentration of wealth into the hands of the few, with all its evil effects on the working of a comparatively new political machinery. Sir John Marriott's evident fear of Rousseau's teachings and of "the Gospel of Karl Marx" seems to have prevented him from completing the political with the economic approach. His sympathy for and understanding of France stop short and a chill creeps in whenever he touches on any of the big popular upheavals; the word "rabble" comes easily to his pen as it did to Carlyle's. To one reader at least his book has gone a long way to explain the English conservative's instinctive shrinking from French popular traditions and some of the deep-rooted and dangerous misunderstandings which only the finest statesmanship on both sides of the Channel can eliminate.

JEROME JENATTON

RUSSIAN FABLES

Russian Fables of Ivan Krylov. With Russian and English Text. Translated by SIR BERNARD PARES. *Penguin.* 9d.

It is surprising that the oppressions and censorships of our generation have not caused a revival in the art of the fable. The only modern example I have read occur in Italo Svevo's *The Hoax*, a story which is skilfully interwoven with fables said to have been written during the Austrian occupation of Trieste. Perhaps on the continent this natural child of tyrants is reappearing. Perhaps propagandists are using fables for like moths they can be put into the clothes of the most august and eat their way into the uniform of morale. In England, indignation seems rather to have taken the form of allegory. We seem never to have suffered those long sieges of resignation where the wily embassies of the talking animal are the last resource. The guile of the fable is a response to the world of force; but it springs from the folk, and the only modern approach to the fable in English, that I can think of was made in the vernacular tales of the American frontier, or occasionally in Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Here the stories came garrulous from the camp fire; they were not polished and repolished into the diplomats' conceits. Aesop, La Fontaine and now Ivan Krylov, whose book has again been translated into English, were fine distillers rather than ruminating brewers of the things they had to say.

Krylov is the most famous of the Russian fabulists. He lived between 1768 and 1844, that is to say through a period of revolution, tyranny and war very like our own. He was in Russia during the Napoleonic invasion, and his poems have filled the Russian language with proverbs. His gullible lions were versions of the Tsar, his mild momentous but unperceiving elephants were the well-intentioned local governors, his wolves and foxes prattled away the plots of official extortion; and there was a chattering menagerie of goats, sheep, cuckoos, nightingales, snakes, gnats and asses who turn out in one role after another and do their sardonic trick. Krylov was often in trouble with the censorship, for bureaucracy was his favourite game, but his became a kind of licensed wisdom which charmed as it stung. Like some lazy and witty fly, his art would alight unchecked and detrimental to the reputation of Tsars, Generals and the whole Russian hierarchy. He has the mischief, the childishness, the shrewd content and endless patience of the peasant. Kutuzov who was in command of the Russian armies in the running fight against Napoleon from Smolensk to Moscow read Krylov's fable, *The Wolf and the Kennels* to his men. The Russian text is said

to give the pleasure of the intricate and crystalline to the reader, and if this must elude us in English, the new translation by Professor Pares does catch the clear cut and nimble sense of drama, and the narrative ingenuity which Krylov shares with the great fabulists:

> "Ho, boys a thief! A thief!" the keepers cry;
> The courtyard gates swing back; the bolts that instant fly;
> The place is hot as hell next minute
> With doughty club comes one,
> The next with gun.
> "Bring lights" they cry, "bring lights." And some for torches run.
>
> Wolf at the corner sits, his stiff grey back well in it,
> He shows his snarling teeth, he bristles up his hair;
> He looks as if his eyes would eat them then and there.
> But as with dogs it's folly to begin it.

The wolf tries a parley, proposes a common cause. But the head keeper refuses. He replies: "My hair is white, if yours is grey." General Kutuzov is said to have taken off his cap to show the whiteness of his hair when he came to these lines, and they have become proverbial for the man who sees through cunning.

The flight from Moscow when the French were forced to eat crows, the ineptitude of General Tchichakof, the land admiral, who let Napoleon across the Beresina and who was once portrayed solemnly enticing the Emperor into a pet which had a large hole the other end, are fables which belong to this period. But chiefly we read about things like the Tom Tit who said he could set the sea on fire, or the cub who was too smart at the hunt, or the elephant who with a vast air of doing justice, tells the wolves they can take the hide off the sheep as long as no hair is touched. Or again, the sheep are told that if the wolves attack them they can bring the wolves to court. The Ass comes into many of the poems Krylov wrote about his official critics. A rich sly vein of insinuation is in all Krylov's verses. But the most charming of them make shrewd fun of foibles and one of these *The Fly and the Coach* is a little masterpiece on the subject of the useless fusser who gets on everyone's nerves and then, when the job is done, takes the credit for doing it.

Krylov owed an enormous debt to the peasants, but, as his verses show, he was not a mere knowing wiseacre. The Aesop tradition of the impromptu fable, is attributed to Krylov also. Listening to a public reading of some long and boring poem, he is said to have got up immediately afterwards and to have recited a tale about a host who choked his guest with fish soup. As a character Krylov had the eccentricity his talent makes one hope for. Dirty, cheerful, innocent, hopelessly lazy, he lived as he pleased. At the time when he had a high official post, he is said to have sat in the window of his office on a hot day, dressed in a shirt only, to the delight of passers by. On another occasion he is said to have gone to Court with the tailor's wrappings still fixed to his gold buttons. His weakness was card playing and there are many stories of his huge luck. The strange thing is that not until he was forty, by which time he had written many conventional tragedies and much harassed journalism, did he discover his true metier.

There have been several English prose translations of Krylov, notably one by W. H. Ralston in the 60's which is enriched by fascinating notes. One misses notes like these in Professor Pares' book, but it has an interesting preface and his new popular translation comes exactly at the right time.

V. S. PRITCHETT

OSBERT LANCASTER

Further Pocket Cartoons. By OSBERT LANCASTER. *John Murray.* 2s. 6d.

Review copies of books convey an invitation. A slip of paper presents compliments, gives title, authorship, price and date of publication; on the reverse the publisher will further stimulate reviewers by printing the word "Notes" over blank space. Brevity encourages brevity. Here are some "Notes" on Mr. Osbert Lancaster's *Further Pocket Cartoons*.

Seen, most of them, on back page of *Express*, where they shine like postage stamps from a brown wilderness of wrapping. Wit! Beaverbrook's final audacity. It needs Strube, on an earlier page, to redress the balance, restore confidence.

What *size* does Lancaster do his drawings? The *Express* scale seems exactly right, yet here we are, 6 inches by 4½, and this is perfect too. More room to appreciate his spaces, on which have alighted, like butterflies, a pair of guardees. They quiver away from a female dung-beetle in the foreground. "That, I understand, is the Reichenau of the A.T.S." Imagine Lancaster at work on the original measuring twenty feet by fifteen, with step-ladder, pail and brushes; a whacking achievement; it is taken by pantechnicon to the glasshouse near Ludgate Circus; there an instrument the opposite of an enlarger reduces giants to Tom Thumbs, and it's found that the Miniaturist has triumphed again. Everyone delighted: Beachcomber and Hickey envious (*they* can't refine themselves to pin-points). L., in a bit of a fuzz, goes off to lunch, where two clubmen sniffing in a corner provide him with next Wednesday's subject.

He isn't a political cartoonist and doesn't aim at attaching labels to situations, but he revels in national distinctions. His two Eyetalianos, one exclaiming to the other, "You say we losa da war. Fine! But can you tella me when?" sum up the slighting affection we feel for a misled people. Musso appears as a buffoon with glaring eyes: a chimp in operetta. His Germans are lumpy Fritzes with a monocle or half a moustache. He has a pretty line in Orientals—tender tapir-like creations who stand watching the tanks go by in a desert, or look up at the Muezzin tower: "I gather," says one exquisite to another, "that Mustapha is considered the Alvar Liddell of the Orient."

Exquisites, buffoons, delicate asses, sissies with a doughy exterior, tentative Blimps, sentimental codfish: in his English types one gets the whole range of the club window and the revue stage, with an occasional Aunty or beetle-squashing female warrior to provide the balance. Some of his best jokes spring from an appreciation of the "weaker sex," marching as to war. They clump past, they stare and swear, they swig port, and the more audacious among them assume baldness as well as cigars. They are more formidable, we feel, in Lancaster's world than any Hitler or Mussolini.

Prettily startled attitudes; tubular eyes, usually scared or sentimentally apologetic; scandalised by the state of the world, by a hefty bit of skirt. Only the hands, in these difficult circumstances, reveal an attempt to impress and command others.

Lancaster's jokes are nearly always witty enough for us to be able to read them out and leave the drawing to the imagination; yet as soon as one sees the drawing, delicacy and gaiety complete the joke. He has a dainty pictorial script, as articulate as written Chinese. . . .

These "Notes" could be prolonged without, I'm afraid, taking us much farther in appreciation of this elusive but immediately affecting artist. Final note: Style of *Marianne* or *Le Figaro* rather than of *Punch*.

G. W. STONIER

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ISLANDS AND PENINSULAS

Many a Green Isle. By GLANVILLE SMITH. *Lane.* 15s.
Inagua. By GILBERT KLINGEL. *Robert Hale.* 18s.
Yucatan. By LAURENCE DAME. *Gollancz.* 12s. 6d.

Travel nostalgia is a minor malady of war. Those who must make war's grim-purposed journeys are exempt from it. But the rest of us avert our eyes from worn guide-books; or alternatively brood with longing over maps. How entrancing, now, is the map of the West Indies with its lovely arabesque of islands curving over the Caribbean! Since we cannot go to them in the flesh, we are ready to welcome books like these, which may carry us in the spirit to a region so desired. Magic-carpet books, however, differ in quality like other means of transport.

Many a Green Isle is of the right sort. The author dawdled a year away in the islands. He likes landscape and seascape, and likes people better. A proper taste for the enjoyment of the extraordinary diversity and mixture of nations which are the debris of modern history. Older history left no trace; European slavery and exploitation wiped out the Caribs almost entirely. But Mr. Smith made acquaintance with planters in Jamaica, peasants in Grenada, Creole English, Spanish, Dutch, Danes, Africans and their mutations, and writes intelligently of all of them. He is, for instance, interesting in an essay upon the different music blended by the coloured people out of their own inheritance and the traditional forms of Catholic and Protestant church music respectively. He gives snatches of folk poetry which whet the appetite for more.

> King William was King James's son.
> All the royal race is run.
> Wore a star upon his breast
> Point to the East and point to the West.

That is a British country dance from the Bahamas. But the Trinidad calypso is Mediterranean and African in ancestral melodic line, and modern in sentiment.

> No more depression I decide to bear,
> My last khaki pants I'm wearing got tear,
> So leave me alone, I don't want no wife,
> Girl, I going to live the bachelor life.

And he notes shrewdly that a vertical colour-bar, as in Saba, where the Dutch Creoles do their own housework, or in St. Barts where the people of Norman-French and Swedish descent have always been economically self-dependent, leaves healthy white people. The horizontal bar of richer islands, where the planter rode leisurely over his estate, and his wife was waited on hand and foot by house-slaves, meant indolence, ill-health, and in the end the increasing dominance of the climatically better-adapted dark race. Thus time has avenged the wrong of slavery: the self indulgence of that wealthy eighteenth-century Herrenvolk ripened the seeds of its own decay. The author indicates, though lightly, the story of the islands: it is with a pleasant shock of recognition that the reader is reminded that the Napoleonic armies were first defeated not in Russia, but nine years earlier in Haiti, where the people rose under Dessalines against the slavery reimposed by the Empire after the emancipation of the Revolution, and practised guerilla warfare and defence in depth.

Inagua deals with one Bahamian island only. Mr. Klingel is a biologist, and planned a detailed comparison of animal life in the West Indies. But as he emphatically does not like human animals, he got a museum to build him a sailing ship fitted for collecting; and then took her to sea with a crew of two, himself, inexpert in sailing, and a novice, and cast her away on Inagua. Such a shocking beginning may put the reader off, if he has any decent nautical feeling; but when the biologist settles down in this island to redeem his folly by a detailed study of wild life the book becomes interesting. Mr. Klingel describes crabs, bats, fish in vivid detail. It is a pity he thinks it necessary to interweave his natural history with a simple-minded and rather tedious philosophy of the unity and interdependence of creation in all its forms. The photographs are good.

Yucatan is a promising subject, unworthily treated. Mr. Laurence Dame is that silliest of beings, a traveller who spends his time admiring himself for travelling. In spite of quantities of self-conscious, coy and whimsical description he conveys only the vaguest impression of Maya ruins, Indian life, or the scenery of the peninsula. The illustrations match the text; as, for instance, a portrait of Mr. Dame and his donkey, in which the donkey is distinguishable by a garland.

A feature common to these three American books is that they are written, not in American but in English: in that careful flowing English which dates (I suppose) from the Concord group, and has an oddly Victorian cadence in our ears. Mr. Smith writes the language well, Mr. Klingel with unbridled Tennysonian, or even Swinburnian, lushness, Mr. Dame with precious affectation. An interesting study awaits some scholar who will assess this division of American literature between authors (not always of the Anglo-Saxon stock) who continue to use the older language and those who employ the vernacular idiom of the States. FREDA WHITE

Bird Display: An Introduction to the Study of Bird Psychology. By E. A. ARMSTRONG. *Cambridge.* 21s.

Mr. Armstrong remarks in his introduction: "If it be true that man never knows how anthropocentric he is, it is not less true that in this age man never knows how mechanistic he is, and a mechanistic philosophy can be no less misleading than anthropomorphism."

The 381 pages which follow are packed with fascinating documented information on the display and extraordinary behaviour of birds. The compilation of this raw material into one volume is a task of real value. The interpretations put upon it are less so, since the dangers of the anthropocentric approach are insidious. Very soon Mr. Armstrong is unconsciously explaining bird psychology in terms of human. Perhaps the most absurd instance of this is contained in the following passage:

> It is noteworthy that some of the species which sing duets hold their concerts at night. It is then that owls mate, wood quails seek each other, and wood rails are active. May it not be that to sing together in the gloom is a more effective bond of union and token of reciprocal feeling than *any scarcely discernible dance or posturing*?

Mr. Armstrong has momentarily forgotten that *owls can see perfectly in the dark*. The eyes which can pick out a shrewmouse many yards away on the blackest night can certainly discern, with the greatest ease, the posturings of another owl. That they do so is proved by recently published flashlight photographs of the male long-eared owl feeding his mate at the nest. We do not give two hoots for such light thrown on bird psychology.

All in a Lifetime. By FRANK BUCK with FERRIN FRASER. *Jarrolds.* 12s. 6d.

Blake was right about the robin redbreast. What then will be the judgment of Heaven upon Frank Buck, purveyor of wild animals to European and American zoos? He describes getting a hundred and twenty-five birds alive to San Francisco, out of two thousand sold him in the Himalayas: the two thousand must have been a fraction of those killed in the snaring. Elsewhere, Mr. Buck says he has imported well over a hundred thousand birds to America. Work out the sum and consider how many winged beings this man has been responsible for killing, besides those he has caged. Yet Frank Buck remains engaging except to the fastidious, who find Gargantua unbearable. There is so much

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> I saw for the first time brilliantly green, jabbering parrakeets flying wild. In that moment, as completely alone and as far away from the world in my mind as I have ever been before or since, I was for the first time in my life utterly happy.

He writes of serpents with tenderness, and of leopards with rapture, and he can tell a good tale: there are, in particular, two excellent elephant stories. The animal parts ring true, and it is they, and the tremendous bounce and brag and enjoyment of the man which recompense for masses of bogus claptrap about friendly rajahs and gushing friends and adoring Malay servants. Even the reader who nauseates zoos will read to the last word this life of a man who loves beasts, and lives his love by putting them in cages.

The Boy Who was Afraid. By ARMSTRONG SPERRY. *John Lane.* 6s.

This is a fine tale of a Pacific island boy Mafatu, who was afraid of the sea. Among the Polynesians, a race of mariners, that fear meant shame; a shame which finally drove Mafatu to a wild lonely adventure to master the ocean and his own terror. The actual writing varies between good straight narrative and queer lapses into pomposity when Mafatu's ideas are presented:

> This world of the sea was ruled by Nature's harsh law of survival. Mafatu knew the sea with an intimacy given to few.

That isn't how any boy, let alone a Polynesian, thinks. The illustrations are lively decorative woodcuts by the author. A good Christmas present, ages five to twelve.

Week-end Competitions

No. 666

Set by G. de Vavasour

The usual prizes are offered for the most tantalising fragment of a lost Elizabethan play. Sixteen lines only are to be "discovered."

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, November 16th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 663

Set by V. S. Pritchett

The usual prizes are offered for a dedication for a book by Chesterfield to Dr. Johnson, Pope to Hervey, Blake to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Whistler to Wilde, Moore to Hardy, Lawrence to Joynson Hicks, or Joyce to Edmund Gosse. Competitors should select one of these pairs of enemies and the dedications should not exceed 150 words.

Report by V. S. Pritchett

Entries for this competition reached a high standard, except in the dedications of D. H. Lawrence. This is perhaps my fault. Lawrence was not a natural dedicator. Evocation, flattery, the straight shot of venom or the polished *tu quoque* would all have been difficult for him; he would (as competitors saw) have only conducted an unelevating wrangle, and the last thing a dedication ought to be is an argument, though it may well be a riposte. Joyce, of course, was allowed garrulity and Leslie Johnson punned well. There are two or three Popes—a good piece of Poison by Jan Britton. The Blakes were plain sailing, for the subject required no great ingenuity; but the right notes of sinister innocent or naive rebuke were struck by G. de Vavasour, Little Billee and F. C. C. Two Chesterfields apologised. The others dedicated a book on manners, with an obvious emphasis, and Wm. Bliss went the whole hog and dedicated Chesterfield's Letters to his Son to the Doctor. There was a great deal in these entries about the manners of civilised society. (Chesterfield's own comment on Johnson's famous letter, I seem to remember, takes some beating. His only comment was that it was well written.) Lastly the Wildes. Great minds thought alike here and wrote variations on Sir Robert Witt's "A poor thing, Oscar, but for once I suppose your own." And "I have never criticised your literary work. That you should have written anything at all is your crime. And it is my own fault that I have not been able to find in it, to use your famous phrase, 'Le beau dans l'horrible.'" The other popular theme is best summarised by Towanbucket's "This is the book, in short, which Oscar will write presently." After I had had my laugh I came to think that brevity was essential to the Whistler-Wilde insult and no one surpassed, in my opinion, the wicked line of Ignotus: De profundis ad externa. The choice of prize winners was difficult: the possibles were F. C. C., Little Billee, G. de Vavasour, Mary P. Browne, Leslie Johnson, William Bliss, Sir Robert Witt and Ignotus. It was a case of rough justice and I think the prizes should be lumped together and divided into three between Ignotus, Leslie Johnson and G. de Vavasour.

DEDICATION TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS
(William Blake).

The Devil last night appear'd to me;
Sir Joshua, he had the face of thee.
Said he: William, what is thy Book?
Open it, William, that I may look.

Sir Joshua's Smile of Simulation
Was lost in the Fires of Inspiration;
Albion slept, Urizen wept;
Under the stone Sir Joshua crept.

Michael Angelo look'd and smil'd
At the Power of Inspiration's Child.
The Moneybags broke, the Sleepers woke;
But Joshua, you could not lose your yoke.

In my Vision I found a Key,
I knew my Book was for such as thee:
And it shall grow in the Hate of a Foe—
No greater Praise among Men I know.

(G. DE VAVASOUR)

DEDICATION BY JAMES JOYCE.

It's the bad boyo he ranks me, jest a heady garbler of dribsen drabs, with my sinical lowquassity (where's the censor my no toryus smutterings?), but sundry times (once he was chronical) as I sitwell ink horner I gleefully thumpull a plump ripe gosseberry out of his criss-cross pi. Not cricit? Wither shall? I wonder! But when all's zed and donne who congreve at his writing? Early loved he sweeping swallow swoops of Swinburne, diplowerably foliowed (watts dun can be humdrum) by tamed timid tupney putney piping. And tess rejoyced I am he was a RebeLliouS hardy champion and backed up his siegfriend so soon. So here's a health to him farther and soon! And 'tis without a buy your leave, not phwishing for complexments, that I dreadicate this follume in fear and rambling to Edmund Gosse.

(LESLIE JOHNSON)

FROM WHISTLER TO WILDE.
De profundis ad externa.

(IGNOTUS)

COMPANY MEETING

HARRISONS & CROSFIELD

MR. H. ERIC MILLER'S STATEMENT

In his address for the annual meeting of Harrisons and Crosfield, Ltd., the chairman, Mr. H. Eric Miller, expresses relief that the company has stood the shock of Japanese aggression in the Far East so well. Out of record profits, £250,000 is transferred to a Reserve for War Contingencies. A dividend of 5 per cent. is to be paid on the Deferred Ordinary Stock.

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Dealing with Rubber, Mr. Miller says: "The whole picture was changed by the invasion of Malaya and then of the Netherlands East Indies. Suggestions have been freely made that the military debacle in Malaya is somehow linked up with unsatisfactory administration of that territory. General Smuts scotched them most effectively in his wonderful address to Parliament. After a taste of Japanese domination I shall be surprised indeed if the native populations do not welcome us back with open arms when the day of deliverance comes. The same is equally true of our Dutch friends in respect of the Netherlands East Indies."

On the subject of synthetic rubber, Mr. Miller quoted the views of Mr. Henry Wallace, Vice-President of the U.S.A., who thinks the cost of natural rubber is likely to have a big advantage over synthetic rubber and that a tariff wall to protect the infant synthetic rubber industry in the U.S.A. would not only force consumers to pay higher costs, but would be a severe blow to other countries and to their faith in U.S.A. friendship.

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